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A COMPANION TO POPULAR APOCALYPTICISM IN THE HIGH AND LATE MIDDLE AGES

Edited by SALLY M. BRASHER

BRILL

A Companion to Popular Apocalypticism in the High and Late Middle Ages

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Abbreviations

A	Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, Abortivus
ADT	Archives Départementales du Tarn
ASL	Archivio di Stato, Lucca
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis
FRB	Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum
G	Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, Gratia Dei
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
PL	Patrimonia Latina
RVNT	Matěj of Janov, Regula

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Introduction

Sally M. Brasher

Apocalypticism is central to the theology and practice of Christianity. The end of times as prophesized in the Book of Revelation proclaims the fundamental premise of the faith that followers exist waiting for the Second Coming of Christ which will signal the end of the world as they know it. At various times throughout the Middle Ages the perception of this event as imminent, thus apocalyptic, became an obsession that reflected an age of insecurity and anxiety. This perception could be triggered by cataclysmic events like the plague or the approach of an auspicious date such as the turn of the millennium. It could also be initiated in response to perceived societal ills, economic crises, or Church corruption. As it was a central tenet of the faith, Church leaders saw themselves as the final authorities on interpreting and anticipating this event, and the Church as a necessary conduit for the faithful to process through this challenging phase of the providential timeline. However, the attraction of understanding the perils of an age in terms of a preordained plan was always strong as was the promise of paradise for the faithful and, when not supplied with acceptable answers by doctrine or ecclesiastical leadership, medieval Christians often crafted their own eschatology.

The biblical four horsemen were omnipresent throughout the Middle Ages as disease, famine, war, and death were constant companions. The Church provided some comfort and assurance of the end of suffering, but signs and portents were powerful in the popular imagination and evidence of an imminent apocalypse, or at best, the onset of the 1,000-year golden age before the fall, was frequently sought but rarely confirmed by officials. While the Church sought to restrain apocalyptic fears, they were often thwarted by events both natural and man-made. Areas of Europe that experienced rapid urbanization and the consequent issues of social stratification, wealth inequality, poverty, sickness, and famine, were peopled by an increasingly literate and pious citizenry who sought solutions to their anxiety that reflected their rapidly changing social reality and who then interpreted many of their trying experiences in millennial or apocalyptic terms.

Church leaders of various eras were perceived, at the very least to be unable to alleviate the suffering of their adherents or, at most, to be too politically motivated or corrupt to offer answers. Pious Christians who feared the coming judgement day, sought out leadership and direction from thinkers who appealed to their experience. In particular, such thinkers emerged during

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an era that saw reawakening of intellectual creativity with the emergence of the university system in the 11th century. Innovative ideologies were often expressed publicly and figures who professed these ideas often existed on the outer edge of orthodoxy. However, they had enough of a public stage for the dissemination of their ideas to reach a wide audience. The obsession with the end of times was frequently an element of the teaching or preaching of such individuals. Their rhetoric resonated with their popular audience who then crafted independent collective responses which were often more radical in nature.

In this volume, we examine apocalypticism and millenarianism in the high and late medieval era in Europe as it was interpreted, expressed, and disseminated in popular culture by a variety of lay individuals, groups, and religious sects. The authors here focus on the creative response to apocalypticism by individuals and groups whose grass-root manifestation of these ideas forced the Church to react and respond. The focus is on those regions of Europe where the popular reaction was arguably the strongest and had the broadest popular base. We do not claim to cover all regions or important religious groups of the era, nor intend this to be an exhaustive survey, but we are hoping this introduction will provide an impetus for expanding the scope of research. We do propose the following selection of groups and individuals best illustrates the usefulness of considering the popular interpretation and dissemination of apocalypticism of the era with the hope of encouraging a greater understanding of the intersectionality and exchange of ideas between elite and popular culture in medieval Europe in general.

The historiographical approaches to medieval apocalypticism to date reflect the current breadth of variety of historical disciplines as well as the inherent complexity of the movements themselves. Originally the purview of historians of theology or intellectual movements, social and cultural historians have added dimensions which provide a broader framework for understanding the phenomenon. Norman Cohn's seminal work, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*,[1] laid the foundation for the examination of apocalyptic and millennialist movements beyond the theological dimensions and ecclesiastical responses. His work opened the field to consideration of socio-political, economic, and environmental causality in the rise of apocalypticism. R.I. Moore[2] and

1 Norman Cohn and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress), *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*. Revised and expanded, ed. A Galaxy Book, Gb 321 (New York: 1970).

2 R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: 2007).

others have illustrated the intersectionality of social movements and heretical groups to which many apocalyptic ideologies were consigned. Bernard McGinn's[3] extensive contribution to the scholarship has contributed much to an understanding of the breadth and variety of apocalyptic thought within the Christian framework. Lester Little[4] and others introduced a perspective on the connection between the rapid urbanization and social class development of the high Middle Ages and the rise of popular religious movements and apostolicism that were often at the forefront of apocalypticism. Recent work by scholars such as Carolyn Walker Bynum[5] and Barbara Newman[6] have encouraged a reconsideration of the gendered elements of apocalypticism and millennialism as well as women's participation in the creative religiosity of the age in general. The authors who have contributed to this volume reflect the latest research in the areas suggested here, with the commonality of perspective that suggests what must be added to the field is an in-depth consideration of the active creativity of the popular reaction to apocalypticism.

There were many small and large popular religious movements which emerged between the 11th and the 14th century, the sheer volume of which reflects the vibrancy of this age of faith as well as a general feeling that the institutional Church was, at best, unresponsive and in need of some reform and, at worst, a corrupted vessel of the Antichrist. The Cistercian and Cluny monastic orders illustrate the demand for reform from within the established Church. Social and economic stressors, particularly among urban inhabitants, lead to the rise of mendicant orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans as well as the lesser-known Bianchi and Order of the Apostle considered in this volume. Women were very active in vibrant lay spirituality, filling lay membership in the third order of the mendicant movements as well as novel groups such as the Beguines and Humiliati. In this volume the impact of gender on the formation of membership and leadership in such popular religious movements is illustrated in a study of the Guglielmites.

There are two characteristics fundamental to almost all popular religious movements that arose during the high Middle Ages. The first is the dynamic creativity and constant evolution of the groups' ideologies and practices. The second is the fraught relationship most experienced with the Church hierarchy

3 Bernard McGinn, *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*, Collected Studies Series, Cs430. (Aldershot: 1994).

4 Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London: 1978).

5 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in Spirituality of the Hight Middle Ages*, (Berkley, CA: 1982).

6 Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Womanchrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: 1995).

which challenged this very dynamism. The sheer proliferation of groups during this era and their subsequent oppression or persecution makes it difficult to catalogue them with any efficiency. Popular religious groups often began under the suspect scrutiny of the Church. Some were ultimately accepted and others not. Groups deemed outright heretical by the Church also proliferated at this time and include the much-considered Spiritual Franciscans, Cathars, and Waldensians, but also the Wycliffites, Hussites, and their offshoots who will be featured in this volume. For this volume, as we will be concentrating on the transmission of apocalyptic ideologies from learned individuals to a wide audience, and their subsequent reinterpretation of such ideas, we will focus on groups and individuals that best illustrate this intersectionality.

Another important element common to most of these groups is the charismatic leadership or foundational ideology of a learned individual. Peter Olivi, Joachim of Fiore, Guglielma, John Wyclif, Jan Hus, and others played an important role as influencers in the creative dynamism of the ideologies of various groups. Much has been done in the field on some of these individuals and their importance to many religious movements of the age. Peter Olivi and the apocalyptic thinking of the Spiritual Franciscans is certainly important in this field[7] but much work has been done here and we hope to illuminate underexplored groups influenced by Olivi and highlight contributions by lesser-known figures, or individuals like Joachim of Fiore, whose ideology was more specific to millennialism and apocalypticism.

1 Augustinian Perspective on Apocalypticism

In the early Middle Ages, Augustine attempted to reign in the threat of the excessive apocalypticism by suggesting the event could not be determined by man. Responding in letters, sermons and finally in *The City of God*, Augustine refuted efforts to predict or date the Second Coming or its signs claiming, "I for one wouldn't presume to calculate the time of the Lord's Coming, which

7 Olivi and the rebellious Franciscan have been covered extensively in the literature, most importantly by David Burr in *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis*, (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). While they also represent the popular religiosity of the age and radical reinterpretation of doctrine, they deserve a separate treatment as they reflect divisions withing an established order more than a grassroots response. See also John Fleming, Michael Cusato, and G. Geltner, *Defenders and Critics of Franciscan Life: Essays in Honor of John V. Fleming. The Medieval Franciscans*, vol. 6 (Leiden: 2009); Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2009), 204–231.

is expected at the end; nor do I understand any prophet to be suggesting a precise number of years in this regard."[8] And, "It is not yours to know the times that the Father has fixed by his own power."[9] His theology of the apocalypse focused more on allegorical pedagogy, denying prophesy. He calmed the fears of his co-religionists regarding the cataclysms of their age by suggesting all empires fall so one's attention should not be on the unreadable signs in this world, but only on the promise of the heavenly kingdom in the next.[10] His vision of the last age as more of a "vertical journey" of the individual rather than a "horizontal" unveiling of history to all peoples, became the accepted canon of apocalypticism throughout the early Middle Ages.[11]

Possibly in part as a response to Augustine's rejection of a knowable apocalyptic scenario, and the Church's perceived inadequate ability to provide answers, popular eschatology of the Middle Ages sometimes became millennialist, focusing predictions on the thousand-year reign of saints that would usher in the final days before the last judgement. Increasingly, adherents to this more positive ideology believed that this era would not be a heavenly kingdom, as Augustine and the bible suggested, but an earthly kingdom lead by saintly men who would lead before the fall.

The need for Augustine to repeatedly respond to concerns of Christians and their desire for assurance regarding the future, is indicative of the continued demand made on those in authority throughout the Middle Ages to respond to the anxiety of the age with definitive predictions for the Second Coming. His refusal to do so also carried through the orthodox theology of the age, frustrating followers and reformers. A recurrent theme among learned individuals who sought to reform the Church was their attempt to consider the nature of millennial or apocalyptic events. They often attracted a popular and even radical following who then crafted their own eschatology. This volume is concerned with this very intersection. It addresses the question of how and why large sections of medieval society embraced the apocalyptic message of these reformers and then crafted their own interpretations. Over the course of the high and late Middle Ages the answer lies, in part, in changes in methods of

8 *Epistle 197*, "Hesychius de Salone et Augustine", translated in *The Works of St. Augustine; A Translation for the 21st Century*, II/3, A translation and notes by Roland Teske, S.J., edited by Boniface Ramsey (New York: 2014), 330.

9 Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Cambridge: 1957–72): "*Non est vestrum scire tempora, quae Pater posuit in sua potestate*".

10 J. Kevin Coyle, "Augustine and the Apocalypse: Thoughts on the Fall of Rome, the Book of Revelations and the End of the World", *Florilegium 9* (1987), 10.

11 Leah DeVun, *Prophesy, Alchemy and the End of Time: John of Rupescissa in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: 2009), 15.

dissemination of ideas. However, we argue here for the importance of viewing the creative nature of the popular response itself. Rather than seeing the followers as passive receptors, or as misinterpreting the message of leaders, the groups considered in this volume constructed novel and radical ideas about the apocalypse and millennialism that reflected their lived experience and were not just reactions to the eschatological exercises of an intellectual elite.

2 Demotic Apocalypticism

While apocalypticism was a popular cultural current throughout the medieval era, at the turn of the millennium, we observe a rise in what Richard Landes calls in his chapter here, the introduction of demotic apocalyptic religiosity throughout Western Europe, reflecting a widespread expectation of an egalitarian thousand-year messianic era of peace on earth: swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks. Landes argues that the approach of the millennial date produced apocalyptic prophecies and prophets, provoking debate among theologians as to how to respond. And while, as with many of our other groups studied here, learned thinkers such as the monk Abbo of Fleury attempted to discourage "dating" the End and emphasized an eschatological denouement (fear and repentance before the imminent Last Judgment), others closely tracked the date 1000 (and later, 1033), and anticipated millennial salvation on earth in the flesh (hope for "swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks"). The demotic religiosity imbedded in such millennial hope (dignity of manual labor, egalitarianism, end of social hierarchy, spiritual meritocracy) flourished at Peace Councils where relics brought from leagues of the round assembled thousands of participants who believed they were ushering in a new age of peace. While they may have been mistaken, the power of people from all walks of life, convinced they were doing God's work, marks the 11th and 12th centuries, attesting to the powerful affirmation and assertion of demotic religiosity in Western European societies that marked the millennial generation between 1000 *Anno Domini* and 1000 *Anno Passionis*.

We can trace the origins of many of the subsequent popular movements throughout the high Middle Ages to this era. Thus, we commence our consideration of the apocalyptic and millennialism popular movements of the age from this seminal time, around the year 1000, and consider those popular movements that arose after this millennial landmark passed, but which left a lasting impact on the minds of the populace throughout Europe. We trace how influential thinkers influenced popular lay and religious groups and who in turn, reacting to specific issues in their social experience, developed their own eschatology.

In addition to the auspicious turn of the millennium, papal reform movements of the 11th and 12th centuries and the popularity of the Crusades awakened new theological and popular attention to apocalyptic and millennialist scenarios in the high Middle Ages. Despite their reticence to specify a timeline, Church reformers seeking to strengthen institutional authority and expand Latin doctrine throughout the West and into the Islamic world, used the promise of salvation through the necessary intercession of the Church before the Second Coming, to bolster religious authority over the secular powers of the growing states of Europe. The clerical reform movement initiated in the 11th century by Popes Leo IX and Gregory VII included an admonitory apocalyptic element, particularly in Gregory's efforts. The ensuing conflict between the papacy and the empire created an era of such strife that these very efforts by the Church seemed, in turn, to signal the apocalypse, and a criticism of Gregory as overreaching was also couched in apocalyptic language by reformers such as Gerhoh of Reichersberg.[12] Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegarde of Bingen, and others also took up the cause of reform and often used the language of the apocalypse and Age of Saints to give vision to the threat of a corrupt Church.[13] However, the eschatology developed by these theologians and thinkers was still generally more abstract interpretation and edification meant to lead to a reform from within the established Church rather than a call for socially revolutionary or heretical action.

3 Joachim of Fiori's Millennialist Influence

The public was less influenced by abstract eschatology and tended to react to specific events or conditions that affected their lives that they felt signaled the apocalypse and looked to religious leaders for interpretation and inspiration. At times there was a disconnect between the affluent and powerful Church and the desperate lives of the populace that created independent reactions to specific events or perceived inaction and corruption of the Church. Frustrated Christians frequently looked to those individual thinkers whose rhetoric reflected their desperation. Groups of followers took the words of these inspirational pundits and often interpreted them as a call for reform of current society and institutions to be adequately prepared for the Second Coming of Christ.

12 Richard Newhauser, "Avarice and the Apocalypse," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, edited by Richard Landes, Andrew Colin Gow, and David C. Van Meter (Oxford: 2003).

13 E. Randolph Daniel, "Exodus and Exile: Joachim of Fiore's Apocalyptic Scenario," in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: 2000), 126–27.

Or they grafted the ideas they heard or read from these sources onto their own independently developed ideas. Such zealous innovation often brought them under the scrutiny and censure of the Church.

Arguably the most influential of these reformers on groups who embraced apocalypticism and millennialism was the theologian Joachim of Fiore, who in 1183 began to have apocalyptic visions and developed a unique eschatology. Joachim seems an unlikely figure to inspire radical popular religious movements. A man of modest origins from rural Calabria in southern Italy, Joachim travelled widely before settling down to wear the habit. He rose to become an abbot, but his monastery of Corazzo was a small, poor, rural institution in the deep south. His renown would come from his prolific writings and their circulation among the highest officials and religious intelligentsia and subsequent dissemination to the wider public. Although at times somewhat controversial, his works never elicited outright censure by the Church. In fact, Pope Clement III encouraged Joachim's writing and approved a new hermetic order he sought to create, the Ordo Florensis, in 1196. Because of the notoriety caused by his many publications, Joachim became embroiled in the regional politics of the papacy and southern Italy and was welcomed and respected by the Norman kings of Sicily. Henry VI granted Joachim a perpetual income out of respect for the holiness of the man. Although he always claimed humility and was drawn to the hermitage and quite monastic life, respect for his knowledge and wisdom brought him into the religious and political spheres of the very contentious Church and state rivalries of the latter 12th century.[14] How then, does this man who moved in the most conservative of religious and political circles instigate populist religious uprisings a century later?

The answer lies in part in understanding the breadth and dissemination of the writings of Joachim, as well as their subsequent suppression by the Church, but most importantly in seeing the central revelatory theme of his theology that became increasingly critical of the privileges of the Church and presented an elegant explanation for troubling events of the time. The creative nature of his millennialist interpretation of the last age of man became a touchstone for individuals and groups who in turn combined his eschatology with their desire for change in their spiritual lives to create activist religiosity. Joachim's impact can be traced through the Guglielmites, Order of Apostles, Bianchi, Wyciffites, and the writings of Constançe de Rabasten, all considered in this volume.

In fact, in the tradition of Joachim of Fiore, many of the popular religious movements of the high and late Middle Ages started off as mostly orthodox

14 For more on Joachim and his influence, see, Matthias Riedl, ed., *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition*, vol. 75 (Leiden: 2018).

orders whose members wished only to strengthen their piety and serve their fellow man, or possibly to reform elements of the Church doctrine or administration. Leaders of such groups often strayed into less than completely orthodox interpretations and may have advocated for reform but rarely was their original purpose to oppose the doctrine and authority of the Church. Often the Church forced them to become more radicalized, but frequently it was the followers themselves whose popular reaction could lead to greater heretical thinking or activity.

4 Apocalypticism and Social Reform

What becomes apparent when studying popular millennialism and apocalypticism in the high and late Middle Ages, is that despite differences in doctrinal interpretation and devotional practice, a unifying theme that runs throughout is the social levelling and gender inclusiveness of these of groups. From the turn of the millennium in 1000, the promise of an age of man that would feature peace and a just earthly kingdom, not only attracted followers from all social classes and genders but by their very nature claimed this glorious age before the end was to be fundamentally egalitarian. Accelerating over the high and late Middle Ages, this demotic religiosity demanded followers radically alter their lives, knowingly defy powerful Church oversight, and upend traditional religious and devotional practices.

While the papacy trained canon lawyers and theologians to construct and promote the idea of a papal monarchy and increase the power and authority of the Church around the medieval world, developing European cities were experiencing unprecedented demographic growth and a consequent rupture in traditional social structures which posed economic as well as ethical and moral challenges to ordinary people. Economic diversity and inequality, rapid social mobility up and down the ladder, the loss of kinship and communal identities, and rising literacy rates among common folk lead to an atmosphere of anxiety and fear. Apostolic lay movements emerged throughout Europe as a direct reaction to these societal pressures. Hoping to alleviate the suffering caused by economic insecurity and social inequity, these groups often focused on the plight of the poor and marginalized. Because of these issues of instability, much of the popular apocalypticism and millennialism in the high Middle Ages reflected the apostolic spirituality of the age. Mendicant orders and tertiary groups expressed their desire for a greater social and spiritual response to the challenges of their era and embraced apocalyptic programs that reflected their independent and passionate mendicancy. Northern Italy in the 13th and

14th centuries witnessed a vibrant apostolicism that often challenged orthodox doctrine, including that dealing with the apocalypse.

As Jerry Pierce illustrates in his essay in this volume, the Order of the Apostles is one such group that started out very much in manner of any number of apostolic lay and semi-lay orders of the 13th century. Along with the Franciscans, Dominicans, Humiliati, Beguines and others, the Order of the Apostles was a popular movement that arose in reaction to the social, economic, and political challenges of the urban areas where they emerged. Their founder, Gerardo Segarelli, preached for forty years the importance of embracing poverty and charity to a growing following. Initially, his preaching met with only moderate interference from the Church, but competition with the Franciscans and Dominicans, coupled with the attempted revival of the Lateran decree of 1215 restricting membership in new orders, led to a crackdown on the group and ultimately the execution of Segarelli. His martyrdom created a popular reaction that drove the groups' followers in a more radical direction. It was under the later leadership of Fra Dolcino that members pursued the values of violent apocalypticism. The group came to believe that the oppression of the Church was a sign of the apocalypse. Members of the Order of the Apostles included men and women of all socio-economic strata. The Order of the Apostles illustrates how apocalyptic eschatology was radicalized as it was embraced by a wider populace looking for answers to their challenging existence.

All the groups studied in this volume included the participation of women. Women were always among the most ardent followers of popular religiosity, held an important place in medieval spiritual culture, and were active social reformers. Frequently held up by the church as spiritual exemplars as illustrated by the rise in the number of female saints in the high Middle Ages, they were increasingly closed out of any official administrative capacity within the church by the high Middle Ages. However, women in urban areas participated in large numbers in both the approved and unapproved apostolic movements, making up majority membership in some like the Beguines and Humiliati. Women were venerated as holy women and even allowed public roles as intellective mystics.

The Guglielmites, examined here, who arose in the late 13th century in Milan, were reacting to the patriarchal hegemony of religious experience and social and political stressors of their urban existence. Their millennialist vision held that the Second Coming would be feminine. For this group, the intellective leader was a holy woman, Guglielma. In the vein of apostolic activism, she was a renowned figure in urban Milan, known for her humbleness, wisdom, and acts of charity. As such, she too did not stray far from the approved expression of lay piety and acceptable social activism. Her growing followers from

all walks of life, under the guidance of Andreass Saramita and the Humiliati sister Maifreda da Pirovano, elevated her status to the personification of the Holy Spirit. They, and members of the Cistercian order of Chiaravalle, believed they were entering into the last age of man, as predicted by Joachim of Fiore, and this Second Coming would be ushered in by Guglielma reincarnated, and administered by a female pope, the Humiliati sister Maifreda, who would replace Church leadership for this final stage. As Guglielma's followers crafted a doctrine for their order that upended Church leadership and allowed Maifreda to preach and lead, they were ultimately condemned by the inquisition.

While popular religious movements of the age often coalesced around an exemplary spiritual figure or took on the teachings of an inspirational figure like Joachim of Fiore, none were passive receptors. Another important commonality among all religious groups considered in this volume is the creative element. The multiple crises of the 13th and 14th centuries ensured that the apocalyptic mood would not abate. The plague became a touchstone event that signaled the beginning of the end for many devout Christians. In addition to the recurrent incidents of the plague, the end of the 14th century witnessed the anticipation of an auspicious new turn of the century as well as continued political crises in the unending papal schism. Alexandra Lee examines the Bianchi, a religious revivalist movement that originated in Genoa in 1399, who believed less in total annihilation or the coming of an Antichrist, and more that only those who did not practice a public display of religious devotion would be taken in the apocalypse. Lee argues the Bianchi represent, as with the other groups here, an intersection between the written word, public dissemination, and communal interpretation and action. Leaders crafted their own origin stories that motivated participants to action. In the Bianchi we can see not only the contours of an apostolic group that utilized apocalyptic ideals in their devotional beliefs, but we also get a glimpse into the process of how the written word was crafted to construct origin stories which facilitated a common understanding for followers of their place in this last age.

5 Apocalypticism and Radical Reform

Popular apocalypticism was a pan-European phenomenon which increasingly centered around criticism of the Church on some level. Debates about theology and doctrine were finding expression among a new class of learned theologians and students of theology whose ideas, in turn, found currency among a wider public. England in the late 14th century was also experiencing the demographic and environmental crisis of the age, but in addition

was facing challenges from a monarchy constantly under threat and an unresponsive and distant Church. In his essay here, Stephen Hackbarth discusses the life and works of John Wyclif who emerges at this moment to articulate his apocalyptic interpretations. Wyclif was representative of the new intellectual milieu of the university-trained theologians of the era. He was a respected theorist and teacher until his work became too threatening. While Wyclif believed in the dynamics of intellectual debate within the exciting new academic culture, the Church became increasingly opposed to this intellectual creativity.

Despite the best efforts of the church to rein him in, Wyclif's teachings spread, and several popular movements arose in response. However, as Hackbarth argues here, understanding the collective identity of followers of Wyclif is challenging. It is difficult to assign them singular characteristics or labels. Wycliffites and Lollards are the most famous, but his teaching had a similar impact to that of Joachim of Fiore, in that they became foundational for myriad iterations. For several centuries, movements arose that claimed Wyclif as inspiration but who then crafted their own variations on his themes, particularly that of his ideas on apocalypticism. In addition to his translation of the Bible into English, his writings were copied and circulated to an increasingly literate public both in England and on the continent. Even groups who differed from him in their apocalyptic interpretations, like the Spiritual Franciscans, were referencing his ideas even as they disputed them. Lollards and other followers who embraced the teachings of Wyclif circulated his bible and his works and used the elements critical to the Church to craft their own interpretations.

A contemporary of Wycliff who resided in Prague, Milìč of Kromêříž constructed his own eschatological interpretation which focused heavily on the appearance of the Antichrist. In her essay, Eleanor Janega considers Milìč's works and their subsequent popular impact. Milìč was a priest and popular preacher who convinced his public following that they were experiencing the third and final stage of the world and that the Antichrist was already among them. Singling out individuals, both clerical and political as the Antichrist and his army, Milič also believed the corruption and moral decline of society were the work of Antichrist. His popular preaching in the very urban capital of Prague gave him some protection from the Church even while he became increasingly critical of them. Janega suggests that his popularity and social activism created the precedent for later Bohemian reform movements that were also steeped in similar apocalyptic eschatology. Around the year 1400, we can trace the development of true radical popular apocalyptic movements whose origins began with Milìč but were developed through the efforts of later

educated theologians and personified by urban citizens who carried this theology as a battle cry. The dissemination of his written works went far beyond Prague and Bohemia and his ideas on the apocalypse echo down through regional reformers, ultimately manifesting in the Hussite rebellion.

The popularity of reform movements in Prague initiated by individuals like Milìč reflect the late medieval intersection of university and urbanity. Not confined to an ivory tower, the university culture was centered around an increasingly literate and activist urban society. Citizens of Bohemia were increasingly frustrated politically, economically, and religiously by both the Church and the empire. The wealth of the Church of the time included holding half of all the land in the realm. The clergy were living less than godly lives and bishops were consumed in political affairs of the empire once again. Pious urban dwellers found resonance in the idea of the Antichrist being representatives of these official offices and saw the moral decay of their city as symptomatic of the end of times.

Popular preaching became increasingly prevalent in the high Middle Ages and the urban areas of Italy, Bohemia, and England certainly provided the stage for an audience thirsty for answers and inspiration. But many of the leaders we encounter when studying this phenomenon were not necessarily preachers or, when they were, their teachings reached much farther than the local pulpit. The universities that were founded by the Church to strengthen the institution and codify the differences between laity and clergy produced thinkers who did not parrot Church doctrine but constructed their own ideas and these frequently called for radical reform and greater participation by the laity. As many of these students of theology came from the growing middle class, their reform agendas often focused on social themes that resonated with their communities and reflected their lived experience. This urban milieu cultivated debate which was influenced by Joachim of Fiore, Milíč of Kromeríč, John Wyclif, Jan Hus and others who then disseminated these ideas across a wide geographic and socioeconomic scope.

The man most often tied to the Bohemian reform movement was Jan Hus. Hus was influenced by Wyclif, Milìč, Janov, and others. As Lucie Mazalová considers in the essay on Apocalypticism in Bohemia here, his impact as well as that of reformers, Jakoubek of Stříbrò, Mikuláš Biskupec of Pehlřimov, Petr Chelčický, and others lead to an increasing preoccupation with apocalypticism leading to a widespread following which came to be known as the Hussite rebellion. While Hus did not advocate for violence and in fact, framed his call for reform as a spiritual struggle, as with many other groups growing frustration and approbation from Church authorities lead to an increasingly violent reaction among some followers. What comes to be

known as the Hussite ideology is in reality reflective of diverse popular intellectual movements that debated the construction of a novel eschatology, one branch of which advocated using violence to soldier against the Antichrist, which was perceived as the corrupt official Church and state, and to enforce moral life. While Hus did initially direct his preaching and teaching to an elite audience, his popularity and the reaction of his fellow scholars, ensured he eventually reached a lay audience and wider public. Hus and his followers distinguished between the corrupt official Church and those whom they believed embodied the true Church, the communion of Christians. The very nature of the official Church's early response indicates that institution's fear of the popular spread of Hus's ideas. They banned the reading of Wyclif and other reformers and prohibited preaching against the official Church. By the end of his life, Hus's persecution led him to see himself as "a warrior at the end of ages," and Hus's eschatology became increasingly dark and obsessed with a violent end. As Stephen Lahey outlines in his contribution to this study, Hus's many followers, including Jakoubek of Střibro, and Miuláš Biskupec of Pehlrimov increasingly associated the official Church with the Antichrist. While the movement broke into several branches, and conducted an intense theological debate, the end result was a general call for violence, leading ultimately for calls for revolution. Here again, we can see the evolution of an eschatology aimed at reform, initiated by a few intellectuals which ignites a popular movement that advances the reform cause to ever more radical aims.

6 Lay Interpretation of Apocalypticism

The period of intellectual vibrancy between the 11th and 14th centuries witnessed a dramatic evolution in the nature of written culture. The Wyclif and Hussite movements can be viewed through the lens of a massive change in the intersection between elite and popular culture. The walls of the ivory tower crumbled a bit, and the impact was nothing short of revolutionary. The change was not only in who could access the written word, but also in who could write. Educated elites within Church and university culture increasingly came to "own" their own work. Earlier writers were more generally copyists, commentors or compilers. Many books were orally dictated to scribes who were responsible for the final product, distancing the completed work from its author. Dissemination of any works was often extremely limited and the typology of producing written works created fit into a rather narrow category of theological tracts. The movement towards a more complex constructed text that could

be authored and produced by the individual, opened up a dynamic era of written culture.[15] This, coupled to the emergence of charismatic preacher figures who could also write their own text, led to the wider dissemination of ideas throughout the medieval world. Finally, as education reached, at least superficially, into lower levels of society, and if one accepts an understanding of literacy to mean various levels of ability to decipher and interpret texts, then a true popular literary culture was possible.

The question of dissemination of ideas often arises when considering popular responses to apocalypticism. We can trace the dissemination pattern in most groups through the writings, preaching, and teaching of individuals but don't often have a picture of the reception, beyond listening to sermons, by individuals or followers. The transmission of ideas is a two-way street, it is at the point of reception that the alteration in apocalyptic ideas occurs. The ultimate expression of followers by their actions such as, processing, electing a papessa, or forming a social revolution happens because they do not passively accept the vision expressed by individual leaders, but craft a response that reflects their specific experience. Certainly, one must consider the rising literacy rate as an important component to the spread of these ideas and movements, coupled with changes in written culture which allowed for the widespread availability of the written word. But once in the hands of followers, how did they understand, interpret, and alter the word's meanings?

Sergi Sancho Fibla provides a case study for this volume of the very nature of this transmission through the revelations of Costança de Rabastens. Her interpretation of eschatological writings and symbols and their use within her regional church illustrates another possibility of the importance of intermediaries in the diffusion of apocalypticism. The late-14th century widow would certainly not have been part of the university culture that produced the reformers mentioned above. She was also not active in any apostolic urban movements like other women. And yet, her individual Revelations on the Apocalypse were disseminated widely. She was, as many of her contemporaries, a self-proclaimed intellective mystic. She had apocalyptic visions which were recorded by her male confessor. She is similar to contemporaries such as Catherine of Siena, in that her revelations had a sociopolitical element that reflected concern with current political issues. What is of interest for readers of this collection, is Sancho Fibla's discussion of the transmission of knowledge of scripture to Constança, her understanding of the information from written

15 Armando Petrucci, *Writers and readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, edited and translated by Charles M. Radding (New Haven: 1995), 145.

texts, and then the way in which she reinterprets this within the context of her own visions and life experience to produce a thoroughly novel eschatology.

Sancho Fibla argues that the focus on Constança's level of literacy has been overstated in the scholarship on the mystic. While it appears she could not write, we cannot ascertain for certain her ability to read. Because of a gendered level of humility in her revelations and self-references to an inability to "read" the word of the scripture, which he argues is figurative, she and her revelations have been largely discounted as original. Sancho Fibla suggests that if we approach her work as a representation of the intersection of text, oral scriptural knowledge, mystical visions, and ritual practices, as well as a perception of the issues and concerns of her age coupled with some level of literacy with which to express these ideas, we get a glimpse into the complex nature of the interchange between popular and elite culture of the age.

Constança's apocalypticism emerged from an understanding and reading of the Book of Revelation and other texts, contact with religious authorities, and finally, directly from visions she experienced during typical ritual practices. She then actively and overtly sought to reinterpret and "correct" the original text. She is consciously doing exegetical work which suggests a level of confidence and creativity as well as literacy. That her visions revolved around political questions of the day in her region reflects, again, the reality of the desire of pious individuals in the late Middle Ages to find solutions to society's ills independent of, or in direct opposition, to Church doctrine.

The essays here propose a methodology for understanding the intersection of elite and popular culture in the high and late Middle Ages in Europe through an examination of a selection of religious movements that sought to know their place in the timeline of the apocalypse. In an age of anxiety precipitated by natural catastrophes and man-made political and societal stressors, medieval men and women sought answers in the doctrine of their faith. This faith was directed and controlled by the powerful institution that was the medieval Church. Officials of the Church claimed their doctrine to be the sole authority that could ensure salvation for the faithful and they paternalistically shouldered the responsibility of shepherding their flock through this world and into the promised heavenly kingdom. Anyone who challenged or veered from this orthodoxy was condemned as a heretic. However, when Church officials and their doctrine failed to give followers the answers they needed, many followers crafted their own interpretations or called for reforms in the existing doctrine. Charismatic leaders frequently opened the door to such extra-orthodox eschatology, but groups of ordinary people, reacting to the reality of their stressful existence, then crafted communal responses that often led beyond religious

reform to address social and political issues as well, inevitably bringing them into conflict with the Church.

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CHAPTER 1

The Apocalyptic Year Thousand: Demotic Religiosity and the Birth of Europe

Richard Landes

A battle has long raged among historians over the alleged apocalyptic expectations at the advent of the year 1000 in Christian Europe. In the mid-19th century, historians like Jules Michelet, Romantic advocates of revolution, depicted the turn of the first Christian millennium as one of intense apocalyptic expectations which, upon disappointment, led to major transformations in medieval society. With the defeat of the Commune in 1871, however, a more conservative school rejected this view and insisted that contemporaries did not even know the date and that the notion of the "Terrors of the year 1000" were nothing but "unhinged rantings" (*divagations échevelées*).[1]

This rejection of the "*le mythe des terreurs de l'an mille*" became a major feature of "professional" historiography, presented as a text-book case of errors corrected by modern criticism.[2] Despite reconsiderations by major historians (Focillon, Duby) who suggested that apocalyptic attitudes were at play around 1000,[3] it was not until the last decade of the twentieth century that some historians revived one or another version of an apocalyptic year 1000.[4] The arguments have been assembled in two volumes published in the early aughts,[5] but most historians of the period still tend to tell their tale without reference to apocalyptic dynamics.[6] The conventional approach holds that Augustine put

1 The phrase is Ferdinand Lot's depiction of Michelet: Ferdinand Lot, "Le mythe des terreurs de l'an mille," *Mercure de France* 13 (1947), 654.

2 Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, *The Modern Researcher* (New York: 1977), 97–101.

3 Henri Focillon, *L'an Mil* (Paris: 1952); Georges Duby, *L'an Mil* (Paris: 1966).

4 Johannes Fried, "Endzeitwerwartung um Jahrtausendwende," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 45/2 (1989), 381–473; Richard Landes, "Millenarismus absconditus," *Le Moyen Age* 98/3–4 (1992), 355–77; "Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000," *Speculum* 75 (2000), 97–145, which brought on their own criticism: Dominique Barthélémy, *L'an Mil et la paix de Dieu* (Paris: 1999); Sylvain Gougheinheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l'an mil* (Paris: 1999).

5 Michael Frassetto, *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium* (New York: 2002); Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David Van Meter, *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050* (New York: 2003).

6 This is especially true of the French, who are much more likely to cite Goughenheim and Barthélémy, than the two English volumes. The French Wikipédia entry for "L'an mille"

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an end to millennial beliefs and hopes for the next eight centuries … only to have them reappear with Joachim of Fiore in the late 12th century.

I think much of this has to do with the lack of familiarity of historians with the dynamics of apocalyptic thought: its appeal, its rapid disappointment, and its mutations. Even some who argue for an apocalyptic year 1000, fail to integrate those beliefs in their analyses of related phenomena (such as "heresy").[7] So let us begin with a brief discussion of terms, and a more detailed study of the kind of millennialism that I will argue was especially strong and consequential around 1000.[8]

1 Terminology

Millennium: belief that at some time in the future there will be a long period of peace, abundance, fraternity, and justice: Heaven on Earth.
Eschaton (End of the World): belief that at some time in the future there will be a Last Judgment where the good will go to Heaven, the bad will go to Hell, and the physical universe will be no more.
Apocalyptic: the conviction that the Endtimes are imminent or have already begun (whether they will lead to an earthly millennium or a celestial Eschaton). Apocalyptic *time* begins when one's behavior is transformed by this conviction.[9]

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contains an entry for "Les fausses terreurs" and cites Barthélémy and Gouguenheim as decisive, and no mention of the volumes cited above, n. 5.

7 Daniel Callahan *Jerusalem and the Cross in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes* (Boston: 2016); review Landes, *Speculum* 95/1 (2020), 210–11; Clare Taylor discusses the apocalyptic dimension ("there is a case for at least a moderately heightened apocalyptic awareness in Aquitaine in the period c. 999 to 1033 …"), but treats apocalyptic as a self-contained category unrelated to, e.g., relic devotions or theodicy (for which see below, n. 73): "The letter of Héribert of Périgord as a source for dualist heresy in the society of early eleventh-century Aquitaine," *Journal of Medieval History* 26/44 (2000), 313–349.

8 For a more detailed analysis of these matters, see Landes, *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), chaps. 1–2.

9 It is important to distinguish millennial from apocalyptic, *contra* Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: 1956) and most scholars e.g., Catherine Wessinger, *Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (New York: 2011). In its non-apocalyptic form, millennialism is quiescent and its impact conservative (peace on earth by and by); only in apocalyptic time does it become radical/revolutionary (end of injustice here and now). This distinction is the key to understanding the role of apocalyptic calculations linked to the arrival of a millennium (below).

2 Demotic Religiosity and Demotic Millennialism

'Demotic' comes from the Greek *demos*, meaning people (democratic = rule of the people), hence literally the equivalent of the Latin-based 'popular.' But I use it in a different, even contrary sense to popular, especially when used by medievalists in conjunction with 'religion.' Whereas both popular and demotic religiosity address the 'people,' popular religion in the Middle Ages most often refers to practices that condescended to an illiterate and superstitious population and fostered their inadequacies, whereas demotic religiosity, rather than 'going down' to them, sought to raise them up and address the whole people (*demos*), elites and commoners.

Perhaps the most succinct example of the difference lies in the attitude towards commoner's access to the Bible. In medieval popular religion, images and sculpture were considered "the Bible of the illiterate,"[10] a formula that perhaps sounded reasonable in the 6th century when first uttered, but continued to be used for over a millennium, suggesting it offered a means to prevent the commoners from achieving literacy.[11] The Church's abiding hostility to translations of the Bible into a vernacular accessible to lay commoners – pearls before swine – reinforces this impression.[12] Clergy must mediate commoners' access to the Bible; *they* tell the story, not the text. The demotic attitude toward commoners reverses priorities: it encourages both literacy and access to the text via translations when necessary, so that everyone – the entire demos – has direct access the *text*, unfiltered by clergy telling the stories illustrated in images.[13] This example highlights perhaps one of the more striking features

10 Celia Chazelle, "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Selenus of Marseilles," *Word and Image* 6 (1990), 138–53; Lawrence Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word and Image* 5 (1989), 227–51.

11 The counter-Reformation council of Trent (1563) reasserted the principle at its 25th session: https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct25.html.

12 Walter Map's reaction to Waldo's translation ca. 1179, *De nugis curialium*, Dist. 1, 31, ed. and tr. Walter James (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 124f; Richard Landes, "Literacy and the Origins of Inquisitorial Christianity: The Exegetical Battle between Hierarchy and Community in the Christian Empire (300–500)," in *Social History and Issues in Human Consciousness*, ed. Andrew Barnes and Peter Stearns (New York: 1989), 137–70.

13 On the commandment to read the text in the hearing of the people regularly, *Deuteronomy*, 31:9–13; Ezra's reforms provided a translator (*Nehemiah*, 8). Compare Map's "pearls before swine" with the rabbinic view that anyone who does *not* learn Torah is like a pig with a gold nose ring: *Pirkei Avot* 6:2; https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.6.2?lang=bi. On the obligation of all men, including manual laborers, to read and study the Bible regularly, see Maimonides (12th century): *Mishneh Torah*, Torah Study, 1:8; https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh_Torah%2C_Torah_Study.1.8?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en.

of demotic religiosity, the aniconic ban on images, especially images of a God who is without image.[14]

The other two most salient aspects of demotic religiosity, which can, in fact, exist independent of religion (and show up in ancient Greek and modern secular texts), are 1) the dignity of manual labor and 2) equality before the law. Both are radical principles. Equality before the law – *isonomia* in Greek – was an early synonym for democracy in 6th-century BC Greece; and the dignity of manual labor, perhaps the most radical notion of all, reverses the vast gap between the 'mass' of laborers and the elites, whether lay or clerical, in which the latter considered any involvement, especially in manual labor, degrading and leisure as sign of freedom.[15] In cultures that consider manual labor honorable, however, leisure registers as dishonorable laziness.

All of these demotic themes appear prominently in the Hebrew Bible, where we find the most radical political implications of demotic religiosity.[16] Whereas the hierarchical (ecclesiastical) monotheistic formula is "One God, one Emperor," first articulated by Eusebius about Constantine, but later taken up by many a lay and clerical ideologue, the demotic formula is "no king but God."[17] The implications of this view that the Chosen people should not have an earthly king, embedded in both rabbinic prayer and biblical commentary, demonstrated its power in the early modern period when demotic Protestants read Latin translations of the Jewish commentaries.[18] The cry of

14 NB: the discussion of images as the Bible of the illiterate appears specifically in the context of a controversy over images, and the concerns of Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles, that the 'people' were worshipping images of the saints: Chazelle, "Pictures, Books and the Illiterate."

15 On *isonomia* and *demokratia*, see *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). On manual labor note that for Aristotle, a "free man" needed slaves precisely to free him from drudgery so he could dedicate himself to the arts of leisure (*schole*). *Politics*, Book I. For a discussion of the sociological issues around manual labor, see John Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (New York: 1992), chapter 8.

16 In the New Testament, demotic religiosity constitutes the background and foundation of all the moral teachings (the Apostles are all working men, as well as Jesus himself). On the radical politics of the Hebrew Bible, see Joshua Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (New York: 2011), and Jeremiah Unterman, *Justice for All: How the Jewish Bible Revolutionized Ethics* (Philadelphia: 2017).

17 Eric Peterson, *Monotheismus als politisches Probleme* (Leipzig: 1935); possibly the first to articulate the imperial version was the monotheist Pharaoh, Akhenaten (ca. 1350 BC), see Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, ch. 6. On the biblical counter-formula, "No king but God," see Gideon in Judges, 8:22–23 and I Samuel 8:7. The cry of the Judean rebels against Rome in 66–72 was "No King but God!" (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.1.6). Berman analyzes the radical anomaly of a covenant with God rather than a human king, *Created Equal*, ch. 2.

18 Eric Nelson, *Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: 2011).

the English millenarians of the mid-seventeenth century, and some American revolutionaries, was "No king but Jesus."[19]

In addition to the various aspects of demotic religiosity in "normal time," messianic visions often see messianic times as the final and total triumph of demotic values. One of the earliest millenarian visions in the Bible (ca. 700 BC) brings equality, manual labor, and God's sovereignty together in a vision of "the Last Days …"

> The law will go out from Zion,
> the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
> He will judge between many peoples
> and will rebuke strong nations far and wide.
> They will beat their swords into plowshares
> and their spears into pruning hooks.
> Nation will not take up sword against nation,
> nor will they train for war anymore.
> Everyone will sit under his own vine
> and under his own fig tree,
> and no one will make him afraid,
> for the Lord Almighty has spoken. (Isaiah 2:1–3; Micah 4:1–4)

This is no magical millennium of super-abundance, of perpetual feasting and peace, of the lambs lying down with lions (and getting up the next morning). On the contrary, however unlikely, here the powerful – *potentes* – voluntarily transform their weapons of conquest and dominion into tools of honest and productive manual labor, of nations accepting divine rebuke. The messianic age is inhabited by manual laborers who enjoy the products of their labor unmolested by predatory aristocrats (now transformed). (If this sounds something like Marx's fantasy of the worker's paradise, *mutatis mutandis*, it is.[20])

This eighth-century BC millennial song – it appears almost verbatim in two prophets – may constitute the most significant poetry in history, certainly in the history of millennial ideas. And, as the theologians of an increasingly hierarchical Church rapidly understood, such ideas were deeply subversive.

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19 Tai Lu, "No King But Jesus: The Rise of the Fifth Monarchy Movement," in *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution 1640–1660* (The Hague: 1973): Thomas Kidd, "No King but King Jesus," *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: 2010), 11–36.

20 On Marx and Engel's millennial ideology, see Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, ch. 11; Joshua Muravchik, *Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism* (San Francisco: 2002), ch. 3.

They accordingly banished millennialism from acceptable dogma. Chiliasm was *Judaizing*: it took the promises of peace on earth *literally, carnally*.[21]

But as much as the Church could try and banish the most radical elements of demotic apocalyptic, they could not eliminate the egalitarian promise of justice in the End, at the Judgment Day, even as prelude to the Eschaton in heaven. Here all people stood equal before the Judge – no favors would be granted (except maybe on behalf of patron saints), and the highborn oppressors would get their retribution. For many among the commoner population, the apocalyptic moment, even in Augustine's a-millennial scenario, meant vindication:

> then will end the tyranny of kings and the injustice and rapine of reeves and their cunning and unjust judgments and wiles. Then shall those who rejoiced and were glad in this life groan and lament. Then shall their mead, wine, and beer be turned into thirst for them.[22]

And, in their minds, beyond the punishment of the powerful, lay the rejoicing and gladness of those who in this life groan and lament under their onerous iniquity, when at last, "the last shall be first." The focus of demotic eschatology is moral: God's judgment concerns primarily how one treats fellow humans; for commoners, this obviously meant that the powerful would be prime targets for retributive justice. In other words: the advent of the Endtimes, whether Eschaton or Millennium, meant a strong surge of demotic religiosity among those who entered apocalyptic time, whether from the laboring classes in hope, or the ruling elites in fear of Judgment.

3 The Year 1000: the Chronology of It All

The long history of dating the salvific millennium to the end of the millennium has been discussed at length elsewhere.[23] Here, I describe the pattern

21 On Christian theologians' growing hostility to millennialism in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, see Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). On Judaizing as a code word for millennialism by the 4th century, see Hillel Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 9/4 (2001), 421–52.

22 *Byrhtferth's Manual*, ed. S.J. Crawford, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 177 (London: 1972), 242, lines 3–9. The author is an Augustinian in his eschatology.

23 Landes, "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100–800 CE," in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven: 1988), 137–211; in my

and its implications for the meaning of 1000 to contemporaries. Primarily, the clerics who invoked these chronologies used them to discourage *apocalyptic* millennialism by insisting that while an earthly "sabbatical" millennium would come after six millennia of travail (from creation), that would not happen for hundreds of years. This calculation, forbidden by doctrine (no one knows the time), had a long but time-limited appeal: as long as the promised date was generations away. It constituted *non-apocalyptic millennialism*.[24]

But as the date approached, the chronology flipped from its original use to precisely what it was created to fight – a fast approaching apocalyptic date and an ideal tool for prophets of doom and redemption. Twice chronographers managed to change the target date at its approach: in the sixtieth century Annus Mundi I (fifth century CE) they adopted a new count for the age of the world that postponed 6000 to AD 800 (A.M. II); and in the sixtieth century A.M. II (eighth century) a new generation, inspired by Bede switched to Anno Domini dating so that when the much anticipated year 6000 A.M. II arrived on Christmas Day 801, not one of the multiple extensive and contradictory discussions of the Coronation of Charlemagne in Rome that day, mentioned the minor detail of the date A.M. II. And that silence was certainly not born of ignorance. Carolingian chronographers knew the A.M. II count full well.[25]

What was the new (distant) apocalyptic target date? Some clerics may have been happy to declare the whole millennium-calculation game over and date by A.M. II in its 6000s. But others, particularly those who had to deal with apocalyptic prophets, found that answer unsatisfactory. What does one say to someone like Thiota, who announced in 847 that the "last day of the world" (*ultimum diem saeculi*) would happen that very year, and gathered around her a large following including clerics who ignored their ecclesiastical (Augustinian anti-apocalyptic) doctrines?[26] That 6000 (A.M. II) was already passed? That 6000 (A.M. III) was not for another 1196 years? Or, now in its comfortable zone of not too far off, but not imminent: 1000 was not for another 153 years?

What would occur in the year 1000? At one extreme stood the millennialists who, through a (predictable) slippage of apocalyptic jazz, shifted expectations of an earthly paradise to the new date, the millennium at the end of the sixth Age rather than the year 6000. Or, according to Augustine's insistence that the

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current book, *While God Tarried: Disappointed Millennialism from Jesus to the Peace of God, 33–1033*, I follow it to the millennial generation (1000–1033).

24 See above, n. 9.

25 Borst, Arno, *Schriften zur Komputistik im Frankenreich von 721 bis 818* (Hannover: 2006), vol. 2, 951–1020.

26 *Annales Fuldenses* ad an 847; MGH SS I, 365; *The Annals of Fulda*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Manchester: 1992). For a discussion of this incident, see Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, 37–40.

earthly millennium promised in *Revelation* 20 was already, invisibly, in progress since the Passion (1033), did the advent of 1000 mean the Eschaton: the release of Antichrist and the Last Judgment? This latter scenario was decidedly more convincing to owls, trained to resist the radical impulses from below. It at once defanged the demotic, active, (political) dimension even as it intensified the passive role for mankind by placing enormous weight on God's direct intervention. In both cases, and often ambiguously, we can conjecture that there were clerics promising the apocalyptic denouement, however conceived, at the advent of AD 1000.

4 Chronological Augustinianism in Action: Abbo and the Paris Preacher of 970

A good illustration of this chronological "crack-up" at the approach of 1000 comes from the pen of the main (if not first) Christian thinker to problematize AD, not coincidentally at the approach of its millennium, the abbot Abbo of Fleury. In 995/6 he wrote the kings of France, Hugh and Robert about an incident some thirty years before:

> Concerning the end of the world, as a youth I heard a sermon preached to the people in the Paris church [Notre Dame?] to the effect that as soon as the number of one thousand years was completed, Antichrist would arrive, and not long after, the Last Judgment would follow. Then my abbot of blessed memory and keen mind rejected another error that grew about the end of the world; and after he received correspondence from Lotharingians he ordered me to answer. For a rumor had filled almost the entire world that when the Annunciation fell on Good Friday, without any question, it would be the end of the world … And since from these various divergences conflict grows in the church, a council should be called so that all those who live in her should know what your diligence grants, that [God] wishes to have us in unanimity in his house.[27]

This is one of those *incontournable* contemporary testimonies to an apocalyptic year 1000, one the anti-terrors school could not ignore or discount on

27 Abbo of Fleury, *Apologeticus ad Hugonem et Rodbertum reges Francorum*, *Patrologia latina* 139:471–72; dated to 994–95 by Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-century Monastic Reform Movement* (Hilversum: 1987), 48–51.

a technicality. They argue accordingly that Abbo won the contest against a renegade apocalyptic priest. For them, the fact that Abbo did not, literally in the shadow of the year 1000, repeat the arguments necessary to refute such nonsense proves the point. Some even dismiss the passage as an irrelevant "author's interpolation."[28] Granted modern historians, living a millennium later, knowing all too well that such apocalyptic claims for 1000 were indeed nonsense, might find this interpretation plausible, but that may not have been the case for people looking into a crucial but uncertain future in which 1000 had not yet passed. Reconstructing this exchange with an understanding of the dynamics of apocalyptic time both in anticipatory excitement and retrospective disappointment, we come up with the following scenario which includes not two but three protagonists: Abbo, the priest whom he criticized, and the crowd before whom they debated (*coram populo*).

In this reading, the priest is not a renegade prophet, but a (late in the game) disciple of the owl's chronological Augustinianism he had learned from his teachers and they from theirs back to the early 9th century. The Parisian populace has gathered to hear what the Church says they should think of rumors from Lotharingia that in 970, carried by roosters who had "convinced almost the whole world," that when Good Friday falls on March 25, the Apocalypse – however conceived – would at long last occur.[29] The priest used the increasingly tenuous anti-apocalyptic argument of thirty years to go, while Abbo argued against any dating at all, rejecting the priest's chronological Augustinianism that both pervaded ecclesiastical rhetoric, and increasingly swayed crowds with its promises. Of the three apocalyptic options they had before them – the imminent Advent of the March 25 Passion in 970, the still-distant but nearing

28 Mostert dismisses it as "completely out of place … digressions which one would like to call with a contradiction in terms, an 'author's interpolation'," *The Political Theology of Abbo* 51, n. 38. Iogna-Prat takes the opposite tack: it cannot be understood outside of its larger context, Dominique Iogna-Prat, "Consistences et inconsistences de l'an mil," *Médiévales* 37 (1999), 92. Either way, the text becomes proof that "l'an mil est décidément sans inquiétude." Iogna-Prat, "Compte rendu de Gouguenheim," ibid. 166. For a more recent assessment: Elizabeth Dachowski, *The First Among Abbots: The Career of Abbo of Fleury* (Washington DC: 2008), 52f.

29 On the earliest apocalyptic prophecies for Friday March 25, see Van Meter, "Christian of Stavelot on Matthew 24:42, and the Tradition that the World Will End on a March 25th," *Recherches de Philosophie* 63 (1996), 68–92. The coincidence of the Annunciation and the Passion on March 25 occurred, exceptionally, three times in the generation before 1000: 970, 981, 992. Given Richard's role and Abbo's youth, the first such coincidence in 970 is the most likely date to provoke these prophetic rumors. Dachowski dates the incident to the later 960s. That date continued to inspire apocalyptic prophecies, especially at the end of the second Annus Magnus in 1065, and as late as 1250 (Matthew of Paris).

date of 1000, and the radical agnosticism of no date at all – few would have been persuaded by the cleric, and even fewer by Abbo's semiotic asceticism. Granted they would be wrong not to listen to Abbo, but neither they, nor the owl ecclesiastics opposing them, could know that.

And what was their response to the passage of time? The next coincidence of the Annunciation and Passion on March 25: 981 … and then, 992. And with each passage of such apocalyptic dates, the priest's promises of Apocalypse in 1000 gained in persuasive power. But for all the wrong reasons … because of the *proximity* of the end, rather than the original and consistent purpose of AD dating for the previous two centuries, its *postponement* of the apocalyptic moment. In particular, the advent and passing of the final March 25th Passion in 992 offered a cornucopia of apocalyptic portents. In 987, the last Carolingian ruler (Louis V, 987) died and was replaced by a new dynasty widely viewed as illegitimate, thus destroying (for those so inclined to read it), Adso's last bulwark to Antichrist (the *discessio*).[30] In 989, Halley's comet lit up the sky. The (to us predictable, to them unthinkable) passage of 992 without Apocalypse would have made it even more obvious to those already in apocalyptic time and determined to stay there, that the clerics had been right all along: Apocalypse 1000. Anyone today inclined to dismiss the preacher in Paris promising an apocalyptic 1000 in 970, as a faded memory in 1000, has no sense of how apocalyptic expectations operate.

In other words, according to one plausible reading, the advent of 1000 created a wide, varied, and intense apocalyptic anticipation at all levels of society, from the clerical chronological Augustinians torn between their increasingly dangerous chronology and their politics, to the political players, including penitential kings (Robert II, Aethelred, Otto III), to the fervent monks participating in a widespread awakening, to the lay population of increasingly assertive commoners.

Abbo's silence on the arguments against 1000, then, were not evidence of indifference, but a call to action: "And since from these various [computistical] divergences conflict waxes within the church, a council should be called so that all those who live in her should know what your diligence grants, that

30 Daniel Verhelst, "Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000", in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 81–92; Kevin Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist: Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington DC: 2005), 167–78. In the most recent self-declared "cautious reading," Simon MacLean never even addresses what impact the end of the last Carolingian dynasty might have had on the last decade of that 10th century, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's 'Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist' Reconsidered," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 86/3–4 (2008), 645–675.

[God] wishes to have us in unanimity in his house." At this point, what clerics needed to learn to deal with importuning *rustici* and fellow Augustinian chronologists, speculating on the meaning of 1000, was far too extensive and complex to be summarized in some final talking points. Indeed, it may not have been clear what the Church should respond to the looming crisis of chronology. And the erudition involved was formidable.[31]

5 The Millennial Generation: Messianic Dreams in Action

There are certain dynamics characteristic of sustained apocalyptic moments and generations, that is periods where apocalyptic expectations were high over several years and decades. Above all, the roads and highways fill with seekers, pilgrims, looking for the "answer" to how to live the right life in preparation for Judgment. These spiritually aroused people are promiscuous about boundaries, eager for salvific teachings, and move easily between different teachers/masters/identity entrepreneurs, ignoring boundaries (us-them, clerical-lay, high-low), at least until they find the right place. In these periods, many different competing teachings arise. Seekers are notorious hostile to hypocrisy and ulterior motives, and compulsively drawn to the intense feeling of intimacy that emanates from any given voluntary community (*a fortiori*, an apocalyptic community), and to which the seeker wishes to join.[32] In this sense, Brian Stock's "textual communities" are best understood as seekers who take a given (biblical) text as a founding document around which they structure their religiosity.[33]

And among the most striking features of seekers moved by demotic apocalyptic religiosity is a strong egalitarianism – judge by spirit not by status, share all wealth. Members show openness to new people who wish to join, willingness to make radical changes in their lives, and break bonds with former (organic) communities, often based on dramatic moments of conversion as penitence for the sinfulness of a former life. Significantly, women play a prominent role in the formation of the more heterodox of these communities.[34] In imagining

31 Peter Verbist, *Dueling with the Past: Medieval Authors and the Problem of the Christian Era (c. 990–1135)* (Turnhout: 2010), 35–84. The fact that Abbo continued to work on the errors in AD dating up to and past 1000, indicates just how important these issues were for him.

32 Edith Turner, *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy* (NY: 2012); Mary Douglas calls it "high group low grid", *Natural symbols: Explorations in cosmology* (New York: 1970).

33 Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Princeton: 1983), 88–150.

34 *Gender and Apocalyptic Desire*, ed. Lee Quinby and Brenda E. Brasher (NY: 2014).

this wave of seekers, whose trace in the documents is largely confined to the most approved and high-born, we can begin to understand why the passage of 1000 did not produce disappointment or a rejection of "dating the end." On the contrary, having entered apocalyptic time, especially at the Peace assemblies, but also in the pilgrimages to the relics, seekers were not interested in shrugging their shoulders and saying, "Oh, I guess we were wrong about dating the world, let's give up this nonsense" – a position more likely to find favor among modern historians. On the contrary, in classic apocalyptic style, they said "We were wrong about the date, but our community is strong; let us find a new one."

A curious account of an earthquake-induced apocalyptic moment in the year 1000, in the area then known as Lotharingia lays out the logic.

> In the year of the Incarnation 1000, indiction 13, epact 12, concurrent 1, paschal term 9, the fourth of the kalends of April, the sixth day [of the week], with the monks celebrating the mystery of his passion and redemption, there was a great earthquake; not as often occurs … but the whole earth shook in every direction with a vast and general tremor, so that it might be clear to everyone what had been promised before by the mouth of truth. For these and other signs that were foretold as necessary having been fulfilled, from here already our hope grows more certain of those things that remain to be completed in order.[35] (Figure 1.1)

In other words, "we thought it was the End, but it was just the beginning of the End, and what we thought were the quakes of *Revelation* were just reassurances that we are closer than ever to Redemption."

One of the ways in which this renewable expectation metastasized around 1000 appears in the shift from penitential assemblies to peace assemblies. Christians had, for many centuries, responded to apocalyptic fears with collective penitential assemblies in which participants from every walk of life and every status gathered and repented, with the powerful (*potentes*) radically changing their attitude towards the weak (*pauperes*). In the past, however, the passage of the immediate apocalyptic fear had meant a swift regression to previous behavior. "But all this was limited to that fixed space of time in which the terror was endemic. As soon as there was some respite and relief from danger, most people reverted to their normal ways."[36]

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35 *Annales Elnonenses*, ad an. 1000 written in a contemporary hand; Bibliothèque municipale de Valenciennes. Ms.343, fol. 47v; MGH SS V, 1.

36 Agathias, *Historiae*, v.5: ed. R. Keydell (Berlin: 1967), 169–70; cited Magdalino, "History of the Future and its Uses," in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies dedicated to Donald M.*

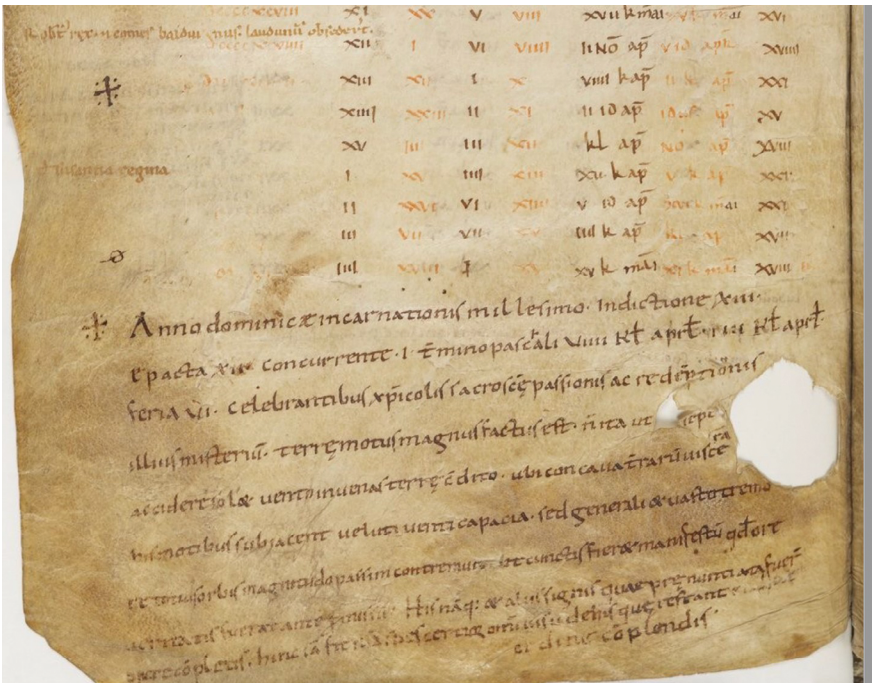
Anno dominicæ incarnationis mil lesimo. Indictione xiii.
feria vii. celebrantibus xpicolis sacrosęę passionis ac redęmptionis
illius mysterium. terræmotus magnus factus est. intra ur
accidere solæ uentum unum terręę dicto. ubi concalefactum
uniuersa
ęcclesiæ. hanc ą

FIGURE 1.1 Account of Earthquake induced Apocalyptic Moment, from 1000. Bibliothèque Municipale Valenciennes 343, fol. 47v; *Annales Elnonenses*, ad an. 1000

Now, however, in the final decade before 1000, a peculiar mutation took hold. Whereas the late antique writers lamented how quickly – a matter of weeks and less – the promises uttered by repentant sinners faded and life returned to normal, the approach of 1000 witnessed a further stage in this penitential wave: the peace councils. Rather than relatively private commitments to change, some of the apocalyptic moments at the approach of 1000 produced dramatic public gatherings in which in which the powerful took oaths limiting their resort to violence, especially where the unarmed were concerned – including peasants, and penitence turned to joy. Thus did apocalyptic moments of penitence turn into social movements, in this case, the "Peace of God."

The movement began in the south, a region where not only did royal writ not run, but the strongest evidence of an apocalyptic rejection of the new

Nicol, ed. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueche (London: 1993), 6. For an example of a sign-driven penitential assembly specifically dated to 1000, see *Miracula sancti agilii*, ed. Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum*, Augustii, VI, col. 587–588.

dynasty emerged in precisely the first Peace assemblies. Indeed, some charters dropped the traditional, Carolingian tradition of dating by the year of the king and dated "anno domini with our Lord Jesus Christ ruling" in the expectation of a king,[37] or, two decades later, with Robert *regnante* and God *imperante*.[38]

Duby's description emphasizes the vast extension of the penitential impulse, not merely to the assembled, but to the whole world:

> Dans les années qui avoisinent l'an mil, la chrétienté sent qu'elle va tout entière franchir le passage. Elle s'y prépare donc en s'appliquant les pénitences que s'imposent les mourants. C'est pourquoi l'on voit tous les rites de purgation, non seulement se multiplier, mais devenir collectifs ; ils sont proposés à l'ensemble du peuple, tout entièr coupable, et appelé à traverser en un seul corps l'épreuve qui débouche sur le Royaume.[39]

We have a particularly detailed account of what happened one council at Limoges in 994 from the pen of Ademar of Chabannes. In his chronicle (ca. 1026–28) he wrote:

> In those times, the pestilence of fire burned over the Limousin, for the bodies of men and women without number were devoured by an invisible fire and everywhere their wailing filled the earth. Therefore Gosfridus, abbot of Saint-Martial … and Alduin the bishop [of Limoges] held council with William the duke [of Aquitaine] and declared a three-day fast. Then all the bishops in Aquitaine came together in Limoges, and bodies and relics of the saints were solemnly brought there, and the body of Martial, patron of Gaul, was raised up. Whence an enormous joy filled everyone, and all sickness everywhere ceased; and a pact of peace and justice was then concluded by the duke and his lords.[40]

The duke, the abbot and bishop of Limoges responded to a great calamity by gathering large numbers of regional saints and elevating the body of St. Martial,

37 In 991, in the Velay, the monastery of St. Chaffre dated a charter "*AD 991 regnante domino nostro Jesu Christo, Francis autem contra ius regnum usurpante Ugone rege*," Devic and Vaissette, *Histoire générale de Languedoc* (Paris: 1745), vol. 5, col. 328.

38 "*anno ab incarnatione Domini MXVI ind 14, e xxviii, imperante Domino et sub eo regnante rege Rotberto*." A.D. Haute-Vienne, 3 H 89 (19); *Chartes, chroniques et memoriaux … histoire de la Marche et du Limousin*, ed. Leroux and Bosvieux (Tulle: 1886), 11.

39 Duby, *L'an mil*, 168.

40 Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, III, 35, ed. Pascale Bourgain (CCCM, 129, Turnhout: 1999), 157.

producing not only a miraculous collective cure, but a collective oath among the powerful (duke, his lords, their men) of peace and justice. In his later sermons composed in commemoration of this second *Translatio* of St. Martial, Ademar repeatedly invokes both Isaiah's passages on the final Redemption and *Revelation*.[41]

Ademar has described exactly that pattern – might one call it the DNA – of the millennial experience. Le Goff, in conclusion to his discussion of millennialism writes:

> If I have lingered, although over-simplifying, on the evocation of this myth, it is because, though masked and fought by the official Church, it harrowed minds and hearts, and *reveals to us the popular masses of the Middle Ages in their depths*, their economic and physical anguish before the permanent givens of their existence: subjection to the caprices of nature, famines and epidemics, their revolt against a social order that crushed the weak and a church that was the beneficiary and guarantor of this order; their dreams, religious dreams which *draw heaven to earth and see hope only at the end of unspeakable terrors*.[42]

When, around 1024, at the time King Robert II met Emperor Henry II to declare a peace between them and began to actively take part in the northern Peace movement, Bishop Fulbert of Chartres wrote a poem, *The Joy of Peace*, in which he invoked Isaiah's millennial song: "The spear rejoices to become a pruning hook and the sword to become a plowshare. Peace brings riches to the poor and poverty to the arrogant."[43] Whether a fantasy with no relationship to the constant depredations of the *potentes*, or a description of a brief moment of messianic fantasy, the poem testifies to the circulation of such fantasies at the highest levels of the society.

The role of the populace at these councils has been the subject of much dispute. Many historians, committed to paradigms of continuity and gradual change, as well as to a conception of society in which order (and importance)

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41 "In translatione beati Marcialis … omnis populus Aquitanicus cum episcopis et majoribus natu ac principibus ascendebat ad orationem, ut non incongrue illis diebus lætitiæ illud congrueret prophetiæ vaticinium …" and cites Isaiah 2:3; BN lat. 2469, 88v. See the full range of apocalyptic and millennial references in Michael Frassetto, "The writings of Ademar of Chabannes, the Peace of 994, and the 'Terrors of the Year 1000'," *Journal of Medieval History*, 27 (2001), 241–55. See also, below, n. 76.

42 J. Le Goff, *La civilization de l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: 1966), 248; emphasis mine.

43 *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, ed. Frederick Behrends (Oxford: 1976), 262f. Hoffmann suggests it may have been written to the king after a council (*Gottesfriede*, 68).

resided among the elite, the greats, both lay and clerical, argue against any kind of mutation or sudden transformation, and dismiss the role of the populace.

Les princes sont là, mais au second plan; le peuple est dehors. Il a rendez-vous seulement le soir pour la grand-messe et pour les proclamations qui se font après l'évangile. C'est là, *n'en doutons pas*, le déroulement même de *toutes les autres* assemblées de paix … il y *toujours* une église, une basilique, pour les réunions statuaires du clergé, élargies à des laïcs de rang … la paix de Dieu ce n'est *jamais* l'assemblée constituante de 1789 ou le meeting de Charléty de 1968. On parle du peuple, des pauvres, mais ils ne parlent pas eux-mêmes.[44]

Many of these assertions contravene the evidence, sometimes in spectacular ways. Nothing in the previous history of Latin Christendom comes anywhere near the size and reach of these public assemblies, with men, women, and children of all social rank attending in the wake of the assembled relics. For rustics, who rarely went fifty miles from their home, and normally saw a few hundred people in their entire lives, such venues were both experientially and historically, *inaudita*.

Those who dismiss the populace's role in the Peace do not consider how the assembled commoners might have felt, what, in their eyes, they thought was happening. Understandably. For some medievalists and for most of the clerics who composed our sources, the peasants were dumb oxen, scarcely human.[45] For other historians, however, the Peace of God marks the moment when the "crowd first appeared on the stage of public events."[46] We shall return to these points when we pick up the threads of the Peace Movement in its second great wave at the advent of 1000 *Anno Passionis* or 1033. In the meantime, let's consider three other manifestations of demotic religiosity in the generation between those two millennial markers: pilgrimage, apostolic communities and "popular" heresies, and Church reform.

6 Relic Cults and Pilgrimage

In principle, relic cults tend toward "popular" religion, condescending to a felt need for concrete mementos to worship.[47] In a sense, relic cults, along

44 Barthélémy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 370 [italics mine]. Cf. Geoffrey Koziol, *The Peace of God* (Kalamazoo: 2018), 42–49.

45 On clerical and aristocratic attitudes towards peasants and vice-versa, see Paul Freedman, *Images of the Peasant in the Middle Ages* (Palo Alto: 1999).

46 Robert Moore, "Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series 30 (1980), 49.

47 Contrast them with the biblical attitude: the lack of a relic cult around Moses or Aaron and the problematic nature of material cults as "snares" as in the case of Gideon,

with literacy and access to the biblical text, offer a good place to distinguish demotic and popular religiosity. Indeed, in the account of the northern, Chartres-trained, cleric Bernard of Angers in the late 1020s, the tension appears as an elite/popular split.[48] But despite his initial contempt, Bernard found the fervor of the devotees of Sainte Foy so great that he became their chronicler.[49]

Bernard is only one case of a widespread phenomenon in this period, in which popular religiosity – especially devotion to the saints – overcame elite concerns, especially concerning both access to the saints and appropriate behavior in their presence (peasant dances and singing).[50] Indeed, one might argue that the vox populi spoke through the saints. Sainte Foy's "jokes" were often at the expense of the *milites* (the armed men whom the council organizers constrained to swear oaths of peace), and in favor of the *inermes*, the defenseless.[51]

It is hard to dismiss the surge of devotion to the saints in this period, especially in the areas where Peace assemblies were held.[52] The relics, previously kept in crypts, not only came out for *delationes* to Peace assemblies, but when returned home, sometimes found a new home above ground, where the people had greater access.[53] When the monks of St-Jean-d'Angely implausibly claimed to have found a (second) head of John the Baptist, the Duke of Aquitaine assembled all the major relics of the region to attend its enthronement at the monastery.[54] Rodulfus Glaber describes the sudden and widespread

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Judges 8:27. While evidence suggests that relic cults did exist among Jews in Late antiquity and the Middle Ages, a strong counter current opposed it, from the halachic principle that cemeteries were impure, to the rigorous rejection by Maimonides. See Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, "Jews and Healing at Medieval Saints' Shrines: Participation, Polemics, and Shared Cultures," *Harvard Theological Review* 41 (1990), 75–91.

48 Remensnyder, "Un problème de cultures ou de culture ? La statue-reliquaire et les joca de sainte Foy de Conques dans le *Liber miraculorum* de Bernard d'Angers," *Cahiers de civilization médiévale* 33 (1990), 351–79.

49 *Miracula sanctae Fidis*, I.13, ed. and tr. Pamela Sheingorn, *The Book of Sainte Foy* (Philadelphia: 1995).

50 *Ibid.*, II.12; 137–39. Bernard dates this particular incident to the time of Gimo (mid-tenth century), but the issue clearly remained alive in the early eleventh. See Bernhard Töpfer, "The Cult of Relics and Pilgrimage in Burgundy and Aquitaine at the Time of the Monastic Reform," in *The Peace of God*, 41–57.

51 Especially true of Book III of the *Miracula santae fidis*, composed after Bernard's death in the 1020s.

52 Some manage: "Pour ce qui est du culte des reliques, je ne vois rien qui soit nouveau ou extraordinaire dans la deuxième moitié du Xe siècle par rapport au IXe." Patrick Geary, "Qui a peur de l'an mil?" *Médiévales*, 19, Fall 1999, 15–55.

53 Kate Craig, "Bringing Out the Saints: Journeys of Relics in Tenth to Twelfth Century Northern France and Flanders," PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2015, 90–94.

54 Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, MA: 1996), 47–49. NB: this occurred in November of 1016. Four months

appearance of relics in 1008: "It was as though they had been waiting for a brilliant resurrection and were now, by God's permission, revealed to the gaze of the faithful"[55] – a nice Augustinian way of describing a belief (how widespread?) that now was the time of the resurrection of the saints who in their reliquaries, "surrounded by throngs … carried about to the sound of trumpets like the Ark of the Covenant, in ever more spectacular processions," preside at the Peace assemblies and inaugurate the millennium (*Revelation*, 20:5).[56]

The culmination of this process over the next century, but already evident in this millennial generation, was the creation of the "pilgrimage-style" basilicas, in which radiating chapels off the choir held elevated relics, and ambulatories including tribune-aisles around the transept enabled both liturgical processions and pilgrims to circulate and visit the relics.[57] As early as 1028 we see this new floorplan at Saint-Martial of Limoges, which only a decade earlier had seen over fifty pilgrims crushed in the narrow accesses to Saint Martial's crypt.[58] Around the same time as the consecration of this new basilica in Limoges, Rodulfus Glaber in Burgundy wrote about how, in the new millennium, churches were built, especially in Gaul and Italy, in such profusion that it was "as if the whole world were shaking itself free, shrugging of the burden of the past, and cladding itself everywhere in a white mantle of churches" (*Quinque*, III, 4.14).[59] The difference between this new pilgrimage-type floorplan and Carolingian churches, where laity remained in the lower nave and only clerics had access to the East end, could not be more dramatic.

If the thrust of popular enthusiasm had a great impact on the Church, that was partly because, as novel and dynamic it might be, it still remained tied to the Church. Indeed, one might consider relic-devotion as the approved form of *popular* religiosity which, in this period, was bursting its bonds. This creative and lucrative relationship, this new dynamic of a *popular* Church, shaped the

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earlier, William had issued a charter denouncing the spread of the heresy among both the people and the clergy that rejected the Church (below, n. 54).

55 Glaber, *Quinque libri historiarum*, III, vi, 19, ed. and tr. John France (Oxford: 1989), 128f.

56 See Christian Lauranson-Rosaz's depiction of the crowds surrounding elevated busts of saints arriving at councils: "Peace from the Mountains: The Auvergnat Origins of the Peace of God," in *The Peace of God*, 125–27 (quotation 127). Glaber uses a similar phrasing to describe God calling the Peace assemblies of 1033 (see below, n. 86).

57 It is difficult to detail the circulation of laypeople (and pilgrims) in churches where custom differed widely. The overall evolution towards their presence throughout the church over the following centuries seems clear.

58 See multiple articles in *Saint-Martial de Limoges Millénaire de l'abbatiale romane (1018–2018)* ed. Éliane Vergnolle (Paris: 2020).

59 See *The White Mantle of Churches Architecture, Liturgy, and Art around the Millennium*, ed. Nigel Hiscock (Turnhout: 2003).

very contours of a new Europe. The *populus christianus* not only found a voice, it fueled the future, centuries-long *élan* of capacious church architecture, from Romanesque to Gothic.

7 Apostolic Communities and Heresies

But not all the religious energy of the commoners, already so rambunctious, stayed within the confines of the Church's sponsorship of relic cults. There were other currents, more demotic, which resisted such blandishments. Indeed, the millennial generation of 1000–1033 witnesses the sudden appearance of commoner heresies, and the first executions of heretics in the Latin West. Reports of these heresies appear shortly after the execution of 22 highly placed heretics at the royal city of Orleans. Some discussed earlier examples; and Glaber dated the phenomenon specifically to "the end of the year 1000," and the "unleashing of Antichrist."[60] And in at least three reported cases of new heresy we find striking examples of commoner iconoclasm, including, in Glaber's account, a peasant smashing a crucifix and convincing the stunned crowd that he had destroyed an idol. In Périgord, reportedly, these "heretics" cited Psalm 113, *Simulacra gentium*, in the presence of a crucifix which they refused to adore. In their fervor, they rejected the cult of the Saints and all the liturgical chants involved as "invented to please man."[61]

Pace the heated debate about Bogomils and Manicheanism,[62] the most likely explanation for them is the explanation they themselves gave to Heribert, who reports honestly enough (and in contravention of the rhetorical need to condemn): "They say they lead apostolic lives." So do the heretics questioned by Gerald, Bishop of Arras in 1025.[63] Like the community of disciples who gather

60 Only one text predates the executions of 1022: an unusual charter issued by the Duke of Aquitaine in 1016 deploring the (unheard of) spread of heresy. Although the duke does not enumerate their beliefs, they are clearly hostile to the Church. A.D. Vienne, archives de l'église Saint-Hilaire, n° 41; *Documents pour l'histoire de l'église Saint-Hilaire de Poitiers (768–133)*, éd. L. Redet, *Mem. Soc. Antiquaires Ouest*, 1847, n° 71, 80–8; tr. *Les sociétés méridionales autour de l'an mil*, ed. M. Zimmerman (Paris: CNRS, 1992), 449–51.

61 Héribert, "A new heresy has arisen," in: *The Peace of God: Social violence and religious response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. T. Head and R. Landes (Ithaca: 1992), tr. 84f, text, 347f.

62 All footnoted "heresies" draw connections to previous identifiable ones, but do not explain what aspects prompted its adoption at that time. Taylor offers one for dualism as a form of theodicy (which it is not) without much consideration of the theodicy of God's final judgment, "The Letter of Héribert," 314.

63 "*Acta Atrebatensis*," in *Gerardi Cameracensis, Opera*, ed. Steven Vanderputten (CCCM, 270; Turnhout: 2014), 4.

in the Acts of the Apostles after Christ's ascension and in anticipation of his return, these communities formed in the millennial generation, in the aftermath of 1000 and in anticipation of 1033.

- **Egalitarianism:** they share everything in common, think "there should be no property," show loving-kindness to all members of the community, do not respect wealthy people who give away money. They cut across all lines of both religious and social status.
- **Dignity of Manual Labor:** they "earn their bread by the labor of their hands,"[64] a direct correlate to holding everything in common and to egalitarianism. A number of modern, secular historians see in this honoring of manual labor and radical egalitarianism a form of communism, a radical rejection of the seigneurial order.[65] In a sense this is true: Communism is a secularization of this demotic religiosity.[66]
- **Independent relationship of the believer with God and the text:** these are voluntary communities that appeal to the individual's judgment, and conversion to their community empowers the new believer to articulate his or her beliefs in ways that frustrate even learned clerics.[67] "No one (no matter how rustic) adheres to their sect who does not become wise in letters, writing and action within eight days, (and so wise) that no one [i.e. no cleric] can overcome him in any way."[68]
- **Iconoclasm:** as much as they honor the works of man's hands, they despise worshiping the works of man's hands. Leutard smashes a crucifix and the commoners who witness it, with their "labile minds" approve (*Quinque* 11, 11.22); the apostolics of Héribert's letter recite Psalm 134 ("Idols of the gentiles, the work of man's hand") when they see others bowing to a crucifix.[69] As a correlate, they reject extravagant liturgical practices and relic cults, and more broadly, the iconic forms of ecclesiastical religiosity. (This is particularly important since the worship of the Crucifix and the increasing suffering

64 "… de laboribus manuum suarum uictum parare," *Ibid.*

65 E.g., R.I. Moore, "Property, Marriage, and the Eleventh-Century Revolution: A Context for Early Medieval Communism," in: *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. M. Frassetto (New York: 1998), 182–3.

66 See above, n. 20.

67 On the increasing importance of individuals and their interiority in both Christian and Jewish circles, see Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History*, 116–19; Avraham Grossman, "Changes in the Individual's Status in Jewish Society in Europe in the Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries," in *Torah le-Shamma: Essays in Jewish Studies in Honor of Professor Shamma Friedman* (Jerusalem: 2007), 479–493 (Hebrew).

68 Héribert, "New Heresy."

69 *Ibid.*

that Crucifixions scenes depict are just at this time becoming subject to a major transformation.[70])

– **No King but God**: there is no direct evidence for this principle, although one can well imagine it among the apostolics. It fits with their rejection of the Church and its claims to monopoly on the means to salvation. It may have developed at late 10th-century peace councils gathering precisely where royal power was, at the time absent: "regnante domino nostro Jesu Christo." In this reading, the saved community had no need of an earthly king. And we may have a trace of it in Héribert's description of the "new heresy": "They never (*nusquam*) say: 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,' but instead they say, 'For yours is the Kingdom, and you rule all creatures for ever and ever, Amen.'" Implied here is also a rejection of the Trinity.
– **Moral Eschatology**: As opposed to the Church, which offered keys to the kingdom through ritual (baptism, eucharist), the apostolics held that God judged one by actions, not by creed. Having declared their commitment to every evangelical and apostolic precept, the peasants of Arras declare: "Therefore, if this way of righteousness (*iustitia*) be observed, there is no need of baptism; if it be transgressed, baptism does not avail."

For the first time in the history of Latin Christendom, clerics complain that common laypeople pretend to be even more religious than the clergy.[71] And well they might. In textual terms, their mixed communities of men and women resembled the original apostolic community more than the gender-segregated clerical ones. Their ascetic attitude towards money and property far exceeded the profit economy that fueled ecclesiastical expansion.[72] They were the charismatic communities, which shone with greater splendor even than the institutional ones, no matter how dazzling the ecclesiastical ones had become in this moment of renewal.

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70 Dominique Iogna-Prat, "La Croix, le moine et l'empereur: Dévotion à la croix et théologie politique à Cluny autour de l'an Mil," *Études clunisiennes* (Paris: 2002), 75–92; Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History*, 301–308.

71 A possible example in the late Carolingian, "In many areas of the empire, Carolingian clergy were not seeking to instruct an insufficiently or only superficially Christianized populace; in fact, religiosity in some quarters abounded to the point of extending beyond doctrinal limits." Abigail Firey, *A Contrite Heart: Prosecution and Redemption in the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden: 2009), 155.

72 Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: 1983). Note that the Duke of Aquitaine's charter of 1016 (above, n. 59) that opens with his concern about heretical criticism of the Church, insists on the clergy's proper attitude towards their collective property.

And of course, the implications of this challenge were grave. These salvific communities had no need for – indeed despised – the Church's salvific rituals, in particular the Eucharist, which some would spit out in secret; they rejected the grand liturgical displays and of course the material displays – icons – so central to ecclesiastical ritual. If Augustine warned against choosing a nearby date for the Parousia, because people would lose faith in those making the promise, then the sudden appearance of these apostolic Christians in the wake of the year 1000, illustrates precisely this disenchantment with the chronological Augustinians, indeed a "crisis of theodicy."[73] Ironically though, and pregnant with meaning for the future of Europe, these disenchanted folks became more, not less, Christian in their religiosity. Their response was not to reject Christianity, but to return to the sources and reject the hierarchical Church that had grown up in that middle age between the Crucifixion and the Parousia.

Not only did these heretics challenge the Church at its very foundations, they attracted *members of that very Church*. Like the clerical followers of the apocalyptic "pseudo-prophetess" Thiota (847), "priests, monks, nuns, and clerics" of the millennial generation left aside their ecclesiastical doctrines and joined these communities. Again, the claim of these communities in which everyone was equal, to a faithfulness to Christ and his teachings, had considerable impact on the "labile minds" of the populace, high and low.

Given both the radical challenge, and the salvific stakes, it is understandable that a Church desperate enough to gather the people with relics at unprecedented assemblies, would also find it necessary to crush this new and dangerous demotic religiosity.[74] The evidence suggests that the executions of 1022, which prompted the widespread warnings about heretics, led to a general crackdown in the areas most affected by the Peace movement. In 1046, a French bishop consulted a German bishop on what should be done with heretics. He responded with the Augustinian insistence that one must wait until the End to separate the wheat from the chaff and burn the chaff. His chronicler added:

> So earnestly did the man of God, after the example of the blessed Martin, strive to impress these ideas that in measure he curbed the habitual

73 Janet Nelson, "Society, Theodicy and the Origins of Heresy: Towards a Reassessment of the Medieval Evidence," in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History (Oxford: 1972), 65–77.

74 Landes, "Can the Church be Desperate, Warriors be Pacifist, and Commoners Ridiculously Optimistic? On the Historian's Imagination and the Peace of God" in *Center and Periphery: Studies on Power in the Medieval World in Honor of William Chester Jordan*, ed. Katherine L. Jansen, G. Geltner, and Anne E. Lester (Leiden: 2013), 9–92.

> headstrong madness of the French who yearned to shed blood. For he had heard that they identified heretics by pallor alone, as if it were certain fact that those who have a pale complexion are heretics. Thus, through error coupled with cruelty, many truly Catholic people had been killed in the past.[75]

Orleans in 1022 inaugurated a sustained persecution of Christian believers identified as "heretics".

8 Church Reform: Political Augustinianism and the Reforming Abbots

In the opening passage of his Five Books of History dedicated to Odilo of Cluny, written in the 1040s (i.e., after the passage of both years 1000), Rodulfus Glaber explained what drove him to write, namely:

> all the many things, not in the least negligible, which are seen to take place in the churches of God and amongst the peoples, especially as the Savior testifies that, together with the Father, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, he will continue to work wonders/ bring about new things (*facturus sit in mundo nova*) in the world until the last hour of the last day. (*Quinque*, 1, p. 3f)

Nor was this a new motivation to write. It was the original impulse, at the command of William of Volpiano some two decades earlier, about which Glaber comments in his *Vita Willelmi* around 1032: "For at his command, I had already described most of the events and prodigies that occurred around and after the thousandth year of the incarnation of the Savior" (*Vita* 13, 294f). "Behold," says the one seated on the divine throne when the Heavens descend to earth: "I make everything new." *Ecce nova facio omnia* (Revelation 21:1–5).[76]

The key to understanding why Glaber's Volpianic and later Odilonic *Libri historiarum* focused on 1000 AD and A.P. lies in understanding that the Church

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75 Letter of Wazo of Liège (1042–48) in response to a letter of inquiry from Bishop Roger of Chalons-sur-Marne (1043–62), *Herigeri et Anselmi Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium* 2.62–64; *MGH* 7.228; translation from Walter Wakefield and Austin Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: 1991), 93.

76 Ademar, in a sermon on the 994 peace assembly, quotes precisely this passage from *Revelation*: BN lat 2469, fol. 92v.

itself could be drawn into the apocalyptic vortex and flirt with some form of chiliasm.[77] Christianity carries the millennial hope *volens-nolens*, and apocalyptic time can also inspire ecclesiastical efforts at delivering the millennium, what Arquillère called "political Augustinianism."[78] Here we find the leaders of the Church itself channeling this spirit of apocalyptic penitence into redemptive action on a mass scale – public vows and deeds, celebrations of *communitas*, new or renewed orders. Once we conceive of the apocalyptic wave that passed through the inhabitants of Latin Christendom at the 1000 mark, as something that could induce feverish activity, Glaber's comments make sense: his depiction of the wonders of the millennium fits a classic apocalyptic pattern of fear transforming, through penitence, into hope and a new dawn of religious glory. If one wants to know what the great monastic "reformers" of this millennial generation were thinking, there are few better guides than Glaber's description of the glorious Church activity, fueled by the wondrous "resurrection" of the saints via their relics, and the vast peace assemblies called by God to transform the world.

It was this combination of transforming apocalyptic hopes for collective redemption into what would *ex post defectu* be called "reform" (a chemistry the Cluniacs mastered better than any other major organization in Europe at that time), and the ability of chronological calculators to sustain the eschatological currents aroused by millennial concerns for at least thirty-three years after 1000 AD, that inspired Glaber's extraordinary millennial history. And he did so under the aegis and supervision of the two most learned, most prominent of monastic patrons. Glaber's task was to tell the story of the year 1000, not as one of failed apocalyptic expectation, not of foolish fears eased by the passage of time, but as a turning point in history, as a new dawn for Christendom, the beginning of the renewal that would persist to the very last hour.

On one level, it served as an anti-apocalyptic statement much like Charlemagne's Christian Empire of 800/6000, and Otto's *renovatio imperii romani* of 1000 – eloquent in the extremes to which they went in order to affirm a normative (non-apocalyptic) vision of the Roman Empire, obstacle to Antichrist, still going strong.[79] But still, like Otto's flirtation with the "Last

77 Landes, "Rodulfus Glaber and the Dawn of the New Millennium: Eschatology, Historiography and the Year 1000," *Revue Mabillon* n.s. 7 [= 68] (1996), 1–21.

78 Henri-Xavier Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique: Essai sur la formation des théories politiques du Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1934).

79 On Otto III, see Benjamin Arnold, "Eschatological Imagination and the Program of Roman Imperial and Ecclesiastical Renewal at the End of the Tenth Century," *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, 271–88; Levi Roach, "Emperor Otto III and the End of Time," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013), 75–102.

Emperor" legend,[80] this reform had a hefty dose of optimistic "soft" chiliasm lurking in the background: the world had been, was being, transformed by "*nova*" that would fill the world from now until the actual *Parousia*. In writing the first three books of this history, then, Rodulfus was not so much telling his own view, but serving as William's mouthpiece. Indeed, the famous passage on the "white mantle of churches" may have been dictated directly by the good abbot himself. After all, the next chapter highlights his role in all this: "Monasteries splendidly rebuilt or founded by Abbot William."

If Charlemagne, at the advent of 6000 A.M. II, saw himself as a new Josiah, and tried to create a Christian Empire based on implementing (as had Josiah) the laws of Deuteronomy, then the great monastic reformers of the age,[81] most prominent of whom were William and Odilo, saw themselves creating a Christian society based on the enforcement of their *Regula* both within the monastery and without. The early eleventh century teemed with leaders great and small, who formed communities of the faithful who flocked to them like bees to the hive.[82] What motivated both the charismatic leaders and their engaged followings, whether monastic (and hence orthodox) or lay (and hence in danger of heresy), was finding the right formula for what to do before God's final judgment. After all, both John the Baptist and Jesus began their career by advising people on how to prepare for the imminent arrival of "the Kingdom of Heaven." Just like Thiota and Gottschalk in the late 840s, these charismatics were teachers of penitence, each with his or her own style and teaching.[83] Notes France: "The galaxy of talent which at that time was attracted to the Rule of St Benedict was astonishing. …"[84]

And no leader succeeds without a following. We literally have no idea how often the "conversion" to a monastic life occurred among laity in this period. We do know that successful monastic "reformers" had the funds to welcome seekers. Glaber says about his patron William:

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80 Matthew Gabriele, "Otto III, Charlemagne, and Pentecost A.D. 1000: A Reconsideration Using Diplomatic Evidence," in *The Year 1000*, 111–132.

81 Landes, *While God Tarried*, 11, 6.

82 "Huius tempore, viris religiosis floruit Normannia, qui ad cum undique confluebant velut apes ad alvearia." Hugh of Flavigny, *Chronicon*, *MGH SS* 8, 400; Olbert of Gembloux (1012–48), "ut apis … ad alvearium coenobii sui …" *Vita Olberti*, 2, *AASS OSB*, 6.1, 526; see also Anselm of Liège on Bishop Notker (972–1008), *Gesta episcoporum Leodiensis*, c. 40; *MGH SS*, 7, 211.

83 Matthew Bryan Gillis, *Heresy and Dissent in the Carolingian Empire: The Case of Gottschalk of Orbais* (Oxford: 2017), 110–13.

84 John France, "Introduction," *Quinque libri*, lxxxi.

> Here indeed the benefit of teaching was to be freely bestowed on all those who converged on the monasteries entrusted to his charge; none who aspired to it was to be deprived, rather an example of uniform charity was to be given, for the slave and the freeman, the rich and the poor. Many amongst these, because they lacked worldly things, accepted food from the monasteries. From amongst these too no small number entered the monastic life and its holy converse. In fact, his educational work conferred the most desirable fruit on the different churches. (*Vita* 7, 272f)

These swelling monastic ranks of the late tenth/early eleventh century are best, I think, understood as the result of a choice many individual believers made about how best to prepare for Judgment, drawn to the places that had both a purifying way of life and the means to fund large numbers of participants. As a reformed monk, one had not only the traditional support of a patron (saint) but also the holy life when facing the Judge. These monastic reformers, like "impressarios" of the relic cults in the fifth century,[85] were "identity entrepreneurs" offering not only new, reborn selves, but organizing thriving communities.

In this sense, monastic "reform" and lay demotic "heresy" are on a direct continuum, a range of solutions to a problem that faced this generation with unwonted urgency. We now know that urgency was mistaken, but it was also rich in results. The first law of millennial dynamics is: wrong does not mean inconsequential, for good or ill. Indeed, one might even argue that the unintended consequences of *demotic* millennialism were especially productive (manual labor) and socially creative (equality).

9 The Millennium of the Passion

In a passage that illustrates Festinger's 1956 observations about how apocalyptic cults handle the acute cognitive dissonance of disappointment by redating, Rodulfus Glaber gives us a remarkable account, written in the 1040s, of what happened after the passage of 1000:

> After the many prodigies that had broken upon the world before, after and around the millennium of the Lord Christ, there were plenty of able men of penetrating intellect who foretold others, just as great, at the

85 Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: 1982).

> approach of the millennium of the Lord's Passion. And such wonders were soon manifest. (*Quinque*, IV, 1)

In other words, the new target date, widely disseminated and increasingly convincing as other moments fell by the wayside (1003, 1009–10, 1012), was the purely Augustinian date of 1033, the end of the "invisible" millennium that began with the Passion and the Resurrection.

And Glaber's pen records how that expectation became a reality for the people (including himself) who lived through it. In the three years beforehand, an atrocious famine that led to cannibalism and convinced people "it was the end of the world," was followed by a wave of Peace of God assemblies from Aquitaine (really Catalonia) "to the farthest reaches of [north-eastern] Francia." These were so enthusiastically attended that, as he wrote with Augustinian modesty, "one might think the people were following directions from God."[86]

Reported in multiple sources, the radical nature of these assemblies attests not only to a waxing movement – what Erdman called the first mass popular movement of the Latin West, and I would call the first mass peace movement in recorded history – but to the development of its program. Glaber describes the collective enthusiasm:

> These miracles aroused such enthusiasm that the bishops raised their staffs toward heaven and all present stretched their palms to God, shouting with one voice "Peace! Peace! Peace!" It was as the sign of their perpetual covenant [*signum perpetui pacti*] which they had vowed in marriage [*spoponderant*] between themselves and God. It was also understood that every five years throughout the globe everyone would confirm this grace of peace in a marvelous manner. And that year there was such an abundance of grain and wine and other fruits of the earth that one could scarce hope for so many in the next five years. Indeed, any human victuals could be had for nothing that year, aside from meat and delicacies: it was the beginning of that antique great jubilee of Moses. In the next, the third, and the fourth year, similar abundance prevailed. (*Quinque*, IV.5.16, p. 196f)

86 On the multiple sources, in addition to Glaber, we have five additional accounts, all analyzed by David Van Meter, "The Peace of Amiens-Corbie and Gerard of Cambrai's Oration on the Three Functional Orders: The Date, the Context, the Rhetoric," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 74/3–4 (1996), 633–657.

Here we have a most rare passage, one that not only describes the masses speaking,[87] but tells us what they were thinking, namely that they were making a covenant with God like the Children of Israel of yore, a new *populus christianus*, a new Chosen people. In their mind they had not merely stepped onto the stage of history: they were the center of that stage, and that, as a reward, they would enjoy the fruits of peace and abundance. If Charlemagne thought, in 6000 A.M. 11 that he, the new Josiah, was creating an *imperium christianum* on the model of Deuteronomy, now in 1000 *anno passionis*, it was the demos that took on this salvific role. With reason, Bishop Gerard of Cambrai denounced such perfection as beyond the grasp of (unredeemed) humans and considered the oaths administering such promises as invalid.[88]

For the first time, moreover, we hear not merely of oaths not to use violence against the unarmed, but an even more ambitious effort to eliminate self-help justice entirely. "The most important of these rules was that the peace should be preserved inviolate so that all men, lay and religious, whatever threats had hung over them before, could now go about their business without fear and unarmed" (*Quinque*, IV, v, 15, pp. 194–96). Notes the author of the *Deeds of the Bishops of Cambrai* (with disapproval): "No one should bear arms, nor should anyone seek to recover them if they were taken. No one should act at all as an avenger of his own blood or of those close to him, but rather should be compelled to spare the attackers."[89]

This last aspect of the peace legislation has been ignored by many, possibly because it seemed so unthinkably ambitious.[90] Perhaps not unthinkable, however, given that at the *millennium* the aristocracy would turn their weapons into tools of honest labor. Given that such a renunciation by the aristocracy represents a central dimension of the emergence of democracy some seven centuries later, such an aspiration, however ephemeral at the time, deserves consideration. Charlemagne had tried, in his Great Capitulary of 802/6001, to

87 Cf. "On parle du peuple, des pauvres, mais ils ne parlent pas eux-mêmes," Barthélémy, cited above, n. 43.

88 Theo Riches, "Bishop Gerard I of Cambrai-Arras, the Three Orders, and the Problem of Human Weakness," in *The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. John S. Ott and Anna Trumbore Jones (London: 2016).

89 *Gestae episcoporum. cameracensium*, III, 52, tr. Bachrach, 218.

90 The translators of the *Gesta* make no mention of this passage. Barthélémy in *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, does not deal with this prohibition (119–26 on vengeance; 169–72 on the Peace of 1033). In a later article he does address the possibility of such a ban on self-help justice but concludes it could not possibly have had any effect: "La paix de Dieu dans le monde de la faide," in *Hommes et sociétés dans l'Europe de l'an Mil* (Toulouse: 2004), 307–15. Cf. however, Van Meter, "Peace of Amiens-Corbie," 650–55; Riches, "Bishop Gerard I of Cambrai-Arras," 127f.

ban private justice (homicide).[91] Charlemagne's effort probably never got off the ground. Here, according to Glaber, it lasted for five years, the Jubilee of peace and abundance:

> But alas! since the beginning of time mankind has ever been forgetful of the benefits conferred by God, and prone to evil; like a dog returning to its vomit or a pig to wallowing in its mire, in many respects they broke their own sworn agreements … The leaders of the clerical and temporal orders alike fell into avarice, and they resorted, even more than had formerly been their wont, to robbery to satisfy their lusts. Middling and lesser people followed their example and plunged into monstrous sin. (IV.5.17)

Again, wrong does not mean inconsequential. Exactly in the year Glaber places this backsliding (1038), Andrew of Fleury told how a sworn peace league rose up in Bourges, consisting of all above the age of 15, who attacked the peace-breakers:

> You would have seen [the faithful] raging against the multitude of those who ignore God, as if they were some other people of Israel. Presently they trampled [the rebels] underfoot so that they forced them to return to the laws of the pact which they had ignored.[92]

Some see this as the incubator from which arose the first communes two decades later.[93] Sixty years later, when Urban preached the "First Crusade" (really the "Final Battle"[94]), he set off a movement of faithful who believed they were doing the *gesta Dei* (the deeds of God), and the first to respond were commoners who saw themselves as key agents of the imminent redemption of mankind. Indeed, Peter the Hermit may well be the first charismatic prophet approved of by the Churchmen of his day.

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91 *Capitulorum generale missorum*, ¶32; MGH Capit. I, 97. The only surviving copy is a 10th-century manuscript from Northern Italy (Paris BN lat 6413, fols. 83–91v). See Warren C. Brown. *Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York: 1997), 69–96; Landes, *While God Tarried*, II, 6.

92 *Miracula s. Benedicti*, 5.2, ed. Eugène de Certain, *Les miracles de Saint Benoît* (Paris: 1858), 193; Thomas Head, "The Judgment of God: Andrew of Fleury's Account of the Peace League of Bourges," in *The Peace of God*, 219–38.

93 Vermeesch, *Essai sur les origins et la signification de la commune dans le nord de la France* (Heule, 1966), 175–83.

94 Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (New York: 2011), 45–67.

10 The Millennial Generation and the Birth of Modern Europe

> [Il faut] souligner … la place capitale que devrait occuper, dans notre vision du Moyen Age, le Xe siècle finissant et le XIe: personnellement je suis convaincu qu'il y eut, en une centaine d'années, un bouleversement des idéologies et des infrastructures économiques ou sociales d'une ampleur très supérieure à celui du Bas-Empire ou du XVIe siècle, et que je n'hésiterais pas à comparer à celui qui débutant à la fin du siècle dernier, secoue si durement notre monde actuel.[95]

In his reflections on his wondrous age, Rodulfus Glaber makes a grand assertion about Europe as the chosen place on the planet:

> This was faithfully foretold in the position of the Lord's cross from which He hung in the place called Calvary. When He was hung from the cross the immature people of the east were hidden behind His head, but the west was before His eyes, ready to be filled with the light of the faith. So too His almighty right arm, extended for the work of mercy, pointed to the north, which was to be mellowed by the holy word of the faith. … the Gospel of the Lord Christ, in coming to the regions of these two areas of the world, the north and the west, has laid the best foundation for the holy faith amongst these peoples. (*Quinque*, I.v.24; pp. 41f)

This may be one of the earliest depictions of European exceptionalism.[96] It comes from the most millennial historians of the millennial generation.

Did this merely reflect the inflated imagination of an "unstable, gyrovague monk,"[97] or was it Glaber's Cluniac continuation of Volpiano's political Augustinianism? And if it was, did Glaber give us any insights into how this

95 R. Fossier, "Les mouvements populaires en Occident au XIe siècle," *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 1971), 257f.

96 There are elements of such during the brief Carolingian ambition to incarnate God's nation; Mary Garrison, "The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an identity from Pippin to Charlemagne," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: 2009), 114–61; Mary Alberi, "'Like the Army of God's Camp': Political Theology and Apocalyptic Warfare at Charlemagne's Court," *Viator* 41/2 (2010), 1–20.

97 Robert-Henri Bautier, "L'hérésie d'Orléans et le mouvement intellectuel au début du XIème siècle: Documents et hypothèses," *Bulletin de philogie et d'histoire* (1975), 67. Gyrovague may be a reproach to a monk, but hardly to a historian of his times. Dismissing Glaber's testimony is something of a commonplace among medievalists.

particular thrust of the penitential Zeitgeist interacted with others. Here the Peace assemblies seem a particularly fruitful place to look: for days on end they put lay commoners and monks in the same terrain, in an atmosphere punctuated by celebration and dancing around the miraculous healing of the elevated saints relics, "as if a resurrection of the saints." Most studies of relations between monks and laity focus on the (documented) cases of interaction with the aristocracy (both positive and negative).[98] But at the peace assemblies, while the magnates sat in council, the uproar of enthusiasm came from this powerfully charismatic connection between laity – men, women! children. It seems quite plausible to posit a particular dynamic in this period in which monks, themselves inflamed with their penitential regime and the elation of their relics' power to heal, preached to the laity, including the commoner. As Dominique Iogna-Prat put it: "le moine de l'an Mil est prophète."[99]

There are many 11th-century dynamics that one can trace back to the Peace of God: the pilgrimages, "Romanesque" church architecture, ecclesiastical reform (revolution) of the later 11th century, urban and rural communes, the crusades. All of them are marked by the active participation of the common people who not only have stepped up on the stage of history but took new initiatives: the new churches in response to the flood of pilgrims; the ecclesiastical reform in response to the demands of the populace demanding clerical purity; the urban and rural communes as the initiatives of commoners who, like the Jews, chose to rule themselves, the crusade of the "poor" begun by charismatics preaching to people who thought that when the pope called on the Christian people to liberate Jerusalem, that meant *them*: *Gesta Dei per inermes*.

Georges Duby's much-praised and much criticized study of the "Three Orders" makes a key point about its sudden articulation of the tripartite division of society in the millennial generation (from Abbo to Bishops Gerard of Cambrai and Adalberon of Laon), not into the late-Carolingian scheme of two clerical and one lay orders, but into the more ancient pattern of prayers (both monks and clerics lumped together), fighters, and workers of the land.[100] Even though *conservative* thinkers (late Carolingian bishops) deployed this schema as a way to oppose the Peace Movement and its monastic promoters (Odilo

98 Rosé, "Interactions between Monks and the Lay Nobility (from the Carolingian Era through the Eleventh Century)," in *Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West* (Cambridge: 2021), 579–97. Cf. Van Meter's innovative speculations in the context of the church addressing apocalyptic anxieties, "The Peace of Corbie-Amiens," 640–44.

99 D. Iogna-Prat, "Entre anges et hommes: Les moines 'doctrinaires' de l'an Mil," in *La France de l'an Mil*, ed. R. Delort (Paris: 1990), 249, 258. Cf. Van Meter, "Peace of Amiens," 633.

100 Georges Duby, *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris: 1978).

of Cluny in particular), they were in fact making a radical concession to the newly recognized group, the *laboratores*/*agricultores*. In a sense, their admission of the commoners to the status of one of the three constituent groups of society represented a rearguard action in which they fought the even more radical elements of the Peace movement (who, like the apostolic "heretics," did not even recognize the other two orders), even as they granted its major accomplishment: the entry of the populace on the stage of history, as one of the three "players" in the grand scheme of the body politic. "One of the most obvious novelties of the eleventh century is the appearance of the crowd on the stage of public events."[101]

Much of the discussion has focused on the way later clerical ideologues deployed this tripartite scheme as a justification for the "feudal order." But, again, later use does not necessarily give us a clue either to how the original writers used the schema, nor to how the members of the various groups saw themselves. Nietzsche pointed out the key to a social phenomenon's genealogy:

> The "purpose of law," however, is absolutely the last thing to employ in the history of the origin of law: on the contrary, there is for historiography of any kind no more important proposition than the one it took such effort to establish but which really *ought to be* established by now: the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world … [involve] a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous "meaning" and "purpose" are necessarily obscured or even obliterated.[102]

Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is, in this sense, Nietzschean historiography.

For the commoners, whose unprecedented attendance at exceptionally political church councils responsive to their collective enthusiasm, the radical nature of the 1033 councils that Gerard implacably opposed, was music to their ears. For those at the Assemblies of the Millennium of the Passion, it was indeed the time when the aristocracy would beat their weapons into tools of labor. Gerard's anti-millennial discourse insisted on both the (Augustinian) weakness of human nature and the importance of armed men – *bellatores* – to

101 Above, n. 45.

102 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, II.12; ed. and tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: 1967), 77.

protect both the laborers and the prayers. But the position he opposed, the one hoped for by the *pauperes* and articulated by the apostolic "heretics", was one in which everyone prayed, everyone worked, and no one bore arms.

Granted that dream was not anywhere near realization. In that sense, and like all Augustinian owls, Gerard was right about human weakness, and if he exaggerated the harmony of the three orders, he was nevertheless right about the enduring divisions within European society for many centuries. But the demotic millennial dream lived on, saw repeated moments of revival,[103] and, when the "three estates" were called in 1789, there was a similar misunderstanding between the various players. The king and lay and clerical aristocracy viewed the "third estate," now grown much stronger through printing, (secularized millennial) philosophy, and industry as a junior partner. But when Sieyès wrote: "What is the Third Estate?" and answered "tout" (everything), he meant the demos, the whole people.[104]

It helps to understand the workings of demotic religiosity on two registers: on the one hand, in apocalyptic time – when the millennium is close at hand; and on the other, in normal time – when the night is long, and everyday interactions, like loaning and borrowing tools, planting and reaping, starving and feasting, trusting and suspecting, dominate life. In the former, all seems possible and the true believer feels omnipotent; in the latter, upholding standards is a rear-guard action: loving an obnoxious neighbor as oneself. If the turn of the millennium brought multiple waves, even a tide, of apocalyptic demotic religiosity, then, with the return of normal time, one can detect a lasting current of new, demotic energy in the coming decades and centuries. The millennialism of the early 11th century launched the slow but resilient presence of a demotic religiosity that, over the last millennium, has transformed the West.

A generation ago, Robert Lopez pointed out that "unstinting credit was … the lubricant of the commercial revolution" (of the 11th–13th centuries), and that the basis of all credit was *trust*, a classic demotic theme.[105] When Richard Southern, describing the immense expansion of legal thinking in the 11th and 12th centuries, wrote, "Law was not the enemy of freedom; on the contrary, the outline of liberty was traced by the bewildering variety of law which was slowly evolved during our period," he described a society that pursued not

103 E.g., The Capucciati of later 12th century (Le Puy), the Great Allelulia of 1233 (Northern Italy), Munster in 1533, the Great Awakening in North America in the 1720s–40s.

104 Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, ch. 9.

105 Roberto Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages 950–1350* (New York: 1971), 72. On "trust" in economic development, see David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are so Rich and Some so Poor* (New York: 1997). On the role of trust in modern society, see Adam Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton: 1997).

the Pauline notion of the law *opposed* to freedom, but precisely the demotic approach found in Deuteronomy: engraved = freedom.[106] When Duby described the shift in the aristocratic mindset from plunder and distribute to exploit and spend, he described a shift away – however minimal by modern standards – from predatory relations with commoners, a shift that involved a widely used technique of partnering with enfranchised peasants to clear the land and to colonize.[107]

Indeed, the articulation of the "three orders" underlines "a growing sense of the reciprocal responsibilities of each category and of their interdependence,"[108] mutual responsibility and support between them: classic positive-sum thinking. Indeed, the Peace of God assemblies operated on covenantal principles that prefigure the Enlightenment's social contract. All the covenants, contracts, associations, guilds, communes (urban and rural), joint ventures, international fairs, that populate the early second millennium in the Latin West reflect the strong presence of people committed to the positive-sum energy of demotic religiosity. Launched in apocalyptic time at the turn of the millennium, Europe now benefitted from a disappointed but powerful presence of this new religiosity, not just in the sporadic apocalyptic outbreaks, but even more, as a profound and lasting commitment to demotic ideals and the wide range of imaginative, voluntary communities that could create – the *vita apostolica*.[109]

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106 Robert W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: 1961), 108. The Hebrew pun plays on the words harut (chiseled, engraved, i.e. the 10 commandments) and herut (freedom); see the Pirkeh Avot 5:2 on Exodus 32:16: "don't read engraved, read freedom"; https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.6.2?lang=bi.

107 Georges Duby, *Guerriers et paysans, VII–XII^e siècle: Premier essor de l'économie européenne* (Paris: 1969), 237–85; Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (New York: 1994), chaps. 5–7.

108 Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: 1995), 288.

109 Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La théologie au douxième siècle* (Paris: 1966), 225–73; Ilene H. Forsyth, "The *Vita Apostolica* and Romanesque Sculpture: Some Preliminary Observations," *Gesta* 25/1 (1986), 75–82.

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CHAPTER 2

From Acceptance to Annihilation: Poverty, Apocalypticism, and the Appeal of the Order of Apostles

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The Order of Apostles was a lay religious movement in late-13th century Italy that combined apostolic poverty with violent apocalyptic predictions. The group's origins under Gerardo Segarelli of Parma, which saw its adherents preach and live a simple, apostolic communalism, attracted women and men of all classes, as well as ecclesiastical support. Yet rivalry with religious orders, especially the Franciscans, and a papally-directed crackdown on unregulated movements soured the Apostles' relationship with the Church, eventually leading to the public execution of members, including Segarelli. His execution radicalized many of the Apostles, led by the Joachite-influenced Fra Dolcino, who preached that oppression by the Church was a sign of the End Times and that a post-apocalyptic utopia awaited those who actively fought such corruption. Retreating first to the mountainous towns around Riva di Garda and then to the distant alpine reaches of Valsesia, the Apostles temporarily evaded the Church. The local populace aided them either because they wanted to take an active role in the coming End of Days or because Dolcino's rebellion offered them a chance to assert their independence against unwanted ecclesiastical and feudal control. Despite Dolcino's claims that they would prevail against evil, crusading armies violently crushed the uprising and ended the movement. And yet, decades after their annihilation the movement continued to have followers and admirers, while centuries later numerous monuments and memorials would be built as a testament to their popularity.

Sources for the history of Segarelli, Dolcino, and the Order of Apostles are relatively scant and exceptionally problematic since they are almost exclusively written by biased mendicant rivals, episcopal crusaders, or inquisitors of heresy. The three main sources are the *Cronica* of the thirteenth-century Franciscan, Salimbene de Adam of Parma, the *Historia fratris Dulcini heresiarche*, likely written by bishop Raniero Avogadro of Vercelli, and *De secta illorum qui se dicunt esse de Ordine Apostolorum*, an early fourteenth-century summary of the Order penned by the famous Dominican inquisitor, Bernard

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Gui.[1] All three of these sources are clearly hostile and filled with great embellishments. Salimbene repeatedly claimed that Segarelli was an unlearned idiot seeking only carnal satisfaction, while the *Historia* exaggerated the number and identity of the rebels in Valsesia to make them appear more threatening.[2] Gui's *De Secta* claimed that Segarelli embraced heretical ideas from the outset, that Dolcino was the bastard son of a priest, and that anticlericalism and violent apocalypticism were cornerstones of the movement from its inception.[3] On the contrary, the Apostles were widely popular, had a significant following, and were an influential religious and social movement that began and for decades remained entirely orthodox in their apostolic poverty and preaching.

1 Segarelli

Gerardo Segarelli's story began in 1260 when he sought admission to the local Franciscan Order in his hometown of Parma to undertake a life of apostolic poverty. As Salimbene explained, the Franciscans shunned Segarelli because he was both uneducated and lacked the proper family pedigree.[4] Undeterred, Segarelli decided to imitate the lifestyle of the original apostolic followers of Jesus on his own, letting his hair and beard grow freely, and wearing sandals and a coarse robe fastened with a cord, a look which Salimbene assumed he

1 Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, (ed.) Giuseppe Scalia, *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis* 125 (Turnhout: 1998). *Historia fratris Dulcini heresiarche* in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* ed. L.A. Muratori (Citta di Castello: 1907) vol. 9, part 5. Bernard Gui, *De secta illorum qui se dicunt esse de ordine apostolorum*, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Citta di Castello: 1907) vol. 9, part 5. Gui has an additional source on the beliefs and practices of the Apostles under Dolcino which can be found in *Inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, ed. G. Mollat, *Manuel de l'Inquisiteur*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1964), hereafter cited as *Practica*.

2 *Cronica* 1/418.1–6, 439–440. See Grado G. Merlo, "Salimbene e gli Apostolici," *Società e Storia* 39 (1988), 2–3 and Raniero Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha: Il Movimento Apostolico-Dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307* (Rome: 1988), 24. For an explanation of the *Historia's* liberty with math, see the discussion of Valsesia below.

3 *De Secta*, 17–19.

4 *Cronica* 1/369.20–22, 388. Salimbene's description of Segarelli has been almost universally accepted by historians without criticism or analysis. Two influential examples are Gordon Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages (1967; repr. Manchester: 1999), 191–195; and Marjorie Reeves, The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism (1969; repr. Notre Dame: 1993), 242–243. For an analysis of this oversight, see Jerry B. Pierce, *Poverty, Heresy and the Apocalypse: The Order of Apostles and Social Change in Medieval Italy, 1260–1307* (London: 2012), 7–23, 73–94.

was appropriating from the Franciscans.[5] Next, Segarelli sold all his belongings, including his small house, and scattered the proceeds in the town square proclaiming, "Whoever wants it may have it!"[6] This renunciation came from Segarelli's interpretation of Jesus' admonition to the young rich man in Matthew 19:21 that salvation could only be achieved by selling all one's possessions and giving the proceeds to the poor, a passage that would become the central and most fundamental aspect of his new movement.[7]

Segarelli preached the importance of penance and apostolic living while also emulating it in his daily life. He actively begged for his meals and exhorted his listeners to perform penance for the salvation of their souls with the phrase, *penitençágite*, his vernacular rendering of the Latin *penitentiam agite*.[8] This call to penance became the primary mantra of Segarelli and his later companions. Although Salimbene was fond of misrepresenting Segarelli as a simpleton who took parables and sayings of Jesus at their most literal, reenacting them without context or explanation, in fact Segarelli demonstrated complex biblical exegesis and preaching. In one instance preaching outside a nearby vineyard, Segarelli used the physical setting to provide a version of Jesus' parable from Matthew 20:1–16, that even those who arrive late to the vineyard (kingdom of heaven) will receive the same eternal reward of salvation granted to those who have been there for much longer.[9] Additionally, the reversal at the end of the parable, where the last will be first and the first will be last, relates directly to the social inversion envisioned by Jesus and embraced by Segarelli and his followers, where the powerless, meek, and, most importantly, poor, will be glorified at the expense of the wealthy and powerful. As a fellow layman, Segarelli's

5 *Cronica*, 1/369.30–36, 388–389.

6 *Cronica*, 1/369.36–370.10, 389: "et vendita domuncula sua et accepta pretio, stetit super lapidem super quem antiquitus potestates Parmenses concionari solebat. Et habens denariorum sacculum … sparsit inter illos alta voce dicendo: 'Quicumque vult, accipiat et habeat sibi!' … Credidit iste valde bene implere consilium Domini, qui dicit, Mat. XIX: *Si vis perfectus esse, vade et vende omnia que habes et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in coelo, et veni, sequere me.*"

7 These actions mirrored those of his predecessors such as Robert of Arbrissel, Peter Valdes, and even Francis of Assisi. See Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: 2000), 13 and J.C. De Haan, "La Setta degli Apostolici e I suoi Capi," in *Fra Dolcino e gli Apostolici tra Eresia, Rivolta, e Roghi*, ed. Corrado Mornese and Gustavo Buratti (Rome: 2000), 48. See Corrado Mornese, *Fra Dolcino, Gherardino Segalello e una Resistenza Montanara Medievale: Una nuova interpretazione nel dibattito contemporaneo* (Novara: 2000), 141–150 for similarities between Francis and Segarelli. See also Raniero Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 20, 24–26.

8 *Cronica*, 1/372.15–19, 391: "Verumtamen verbum Domini frequenter dicebat: 'Penitençágite!' … Et ita processu temporis dixerunt multis diebus sui sequaces."

9 *Cronica*, 1/371.13–19, 390. See also Grado Merlo, "Salimbene e gli Apostolici," 9.

understanding and use of Scripture would have been appealing to his audience because it was both sophisticated in its detail yet simple and understandable in its application.[10]

Segarelli's simple message of penitential poverty soon attracted followers, who adopted the same rough habits and divested themselves of all belongings, content to live a life modeled on that of the original twelve Apostles. This new Order of Apostles spread its interpretation of poverty and penance across the region, attracting men and women from all social classes.[11] Their simple, pious lifestyle, centered on communal living and penitential exhortations, earned them praise and material support from the laity; and Segarelli and his followers were continually offered meals wherever they went, especially in private homes.[12] These meals also served as a public example of their continual commitment to the apostolic life. Members of the Order ate openly in the streets wherever they happened to be traveling, with the locals providing both the food and even the table they sat at.[13] Their renouncement of ownership included the food itself, for when they finished a meal, they took nothing with them, leaving even bread and wine behind, publicly demonstrating that they were "the perfect poor of Christ, having as it were, no thought of the morrow, nor having house or home."[14] Consequently, the popularity of the Order continued to grow and spread for the next several decades.[15]

The people of Parma clearly admired Segarelli and his simple piety. Many of them showed their support by joining Segarelli, and the number of these followers quickly grew to thirty.[16] A ritual of initiation was established to symbolize both the group's adherence to apostolic poverty and their rejection of materialism. Members would congregate together in a room, disrobe, and toss their clothes into a pile, "so that, naked, they might follow a naked Christ." Then, the discarded clothes were collected and randomly redistributed to the participants. In Salimbene's version of the ceremony, he noted with disgust

10 One prominent example was Segarelli's use of Proverbs, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans to explain his refusal to assume active leadership of the Apostles. See *Cronica*, 1/376.23–29, 396.

11 Regarding the rapid increase in membership, see *Cronica*, 1/373.20–23, 392–393.

12 *Cronica*, 1/372.19–20, 391.

13 *Practica* 5.3.4, 96.

14 *Practica* 5.3.4, 96: "in signum quo sint perfecti pauperes Christi, quasi non cogitent de crastino et quasi non habeant domum neque mansionem."

15 Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 46–47; Corrado Mornese, *Fra Dolcino, Gherardino Segalello e una Resistenza Montonara Medievale: Una nuova interpretazione nel dibattito contemporaneo* (Novara: 2000), 73; 88.

16 *Cronica*, 1/373.20–23, 392–393.

that a woman entered the room (among the naked men) and was responsible for the redistribution, insinuating that some sort of sexual impropriety took place.[17] Bernard Gui's later version of the ceremony omits any scandalous elements, noting simply that the initiate divests himself of all his garments, as a sign of abnegation, and renounces all that he possesses as a sign of the "perfection of evangelical poverty."[18] He added that henceforward, the initiate was prohibited from possessing, accepting, or even carrying money, living exclusively from charity and "saving nothing for the morrow."[19] This ceremony of clothing exchange underscores the group's piety and commitment to communal poverty. It symbolizes the utter renunciation and loss of attachment to material belongings as well as each member's willingness to share everything with their neighbor, and was the critical requirement to be a member of the Order.[20]

The Order was well received in Parma, Bologna, and other Italian cities, supported by both the laity and many prominent ecclesiastics as a useful spiritual organization.[21] In many cities, the Apostles performed pious duties ranging from preaching to assisting the sick, which only increased their popularity and membership.[22] Ironically, it appears that the real source of Salimbene's enmity toward Segarelli was in fact economic, as he feared the Apostles would actually benefit from charitable donations that had previously gone to the Franciscans. In a telling moment of honesty, Salimbene bemoaned the fact that his own fellow citizens of Parma, both men and women, willingly give more to the Apostles than they give to the Franciscans and the Dominicans.[23] This support was also not restricted to one-off almsgiving, as numerous testaments in Bologna between 1272 and 1301 reveal significant *pro anima* gifts left in wills specifically to the Order of Apostles, bequeathed by various prominent and wealthy women and men.[24] Thus, the Apostles had quickly become a significant movement and enthusiastically supported by the laity.

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17 *Cronica*, 1/382.23–383.1, 402: "ut nudi nudum Christi de cetero sequerentur." See Grado G. Merlo, *Eretici ed Eresie Medievali* (Bologna: 1989), 103–104, for a discussion of how Salimbene could twist the optics of this ceremony into something scandalous.

18 *Practica*, 5.3.2, 86: "in signum perfectionis evangelice paupertatis."

19 *Practica*, 5.3.2, 86.

20 Corrado Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana e Resistenza Montanara* (Rome: 2003), 88.

21 *Cronica* 1/392.23–26, 413. See also 1/373.26–30, 393, 1/400.24–31, 422 and 1/404.9–13, 426.

22 J.C. De Haan, "La Setta degli Apostolici e I suoi Capi," in *Fra Dolcino e gli Apostolici tra Eresia, Rivolta, e Roghi*, ed. Corrado Mornese and Gustavo Buratti (Rome: 2000), 50.

23 *Cronica* 1/373.24–26, 393.

24 Brian Carniello, "Gerard Segarelli and the Order of Apostles at Parma and Bologna: Mendicant Rivalry and Heresy in Thirteenth-Century Lombardy," Master's Thesis (Western Michigan University, 1996), 40–46.

2 Segarelli's Orthodoxy

The widespread support the Apostles received also came from prominent individuals within the Church itself, a clear indication of both their popularity and orthodoxy, contrary to both Salimbene's denigration and Gui's false proclamation that they were heretical from the outset. In fact, the early years of the Order were replete with examples of Segarelli's orthodoxy and deference to church authority, most notably in his pursuit of ecclesiastical oversight. In its earliest stages, Segarelli conferred with a papal notary, Master Albert of Parma, regarding whether they should have a rector. He referred them to the abbot of the Cistercian monastery in Parma, who said they should not have a monastic residence nor congregate in any houses, but instead they should "travel through the world," as they had been doing, with their long hair and beards, wearing mantles over their shoulders, seeking hospitality from others.[25] This directive from the abbot acted as an informal rule for the Apostles and, more importantly, it gave the group ecclesiastical legitimacy. Segarelli wanted his followers to show themselves to the world, sending some of them to the Papal Court in Rome.[26] The decision to appear before the Papal Curia established that Segarelli and his followers actively sought papal approval and legitimacy and were not, in fact, in any way interested in heretical doctrine like the Cathars or the anticlericalism of the Waldensians.[27]

Bishops in various cities also supported the Order of Apostles by allowing members to preach in their cities and their cathedrals. A key example of this episcopal support concerned a young member of the Apostles, referred to as the "boy preacher," whose Franciscan uncle had trained him in copying sermons in the hopes that he might join the Friars Minor. Much like Segarelli, the young man was refused admission for reasons unknown but promptly joined the Apostles and quickly began preaching from those very same sermons to overflow gatherings of lay men and women in various cathedrals, including those of the archbishops of Ravenna and Ferrara, as well as other cities.[28] The young man's preaching was so popular in fact, that when he started a sermon in

25 *Cronica*, 1/377.3–13, 396.

26 *Cronica*, 1/383.8–11, 402.

27 For Segarelli's desire for legitimacy see Mornese, *Fra Dolcino*, 74 and Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 57–65, where he argues that by adopting Franciscan attire, Segarelli was attempting to give the Apostles the outward appearance of a legitimate and orthodox order. For the anticlerical contrast of the Waldensians, see Brian Carniello, "Gerardo Segarelli as the Anti-Francis: Mendicant Rivalry and Heresy in Medieval Italy, 1260–1300," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57/2, April 2006, 235–236.

28 *Cronica*, 1/384.17–23, 404 and 1/386.15–36, 406.

the cathedral of Ferrara, the audience listening to the Franciscan Bonaventura de Iseo nearby rushed out immediately, lest they be unable to get a seat.[29] Clearly, the Apostles had to have at least the tacit support of these bishops and archbishops in order to be allowed to preach in their cathedrals, a significant indicator of their widespread acceptance.[30]

3 Apostolic Sisters

The Apostles were especially popular with women, as many joined the Order and, in keeping with the group's egalitarianism and equality, played an active role in it alongside the men, spreading the group's message of poverty and penance. One of the earliest members, and also the only female follower whose name was mentioned in Salimbene's chronicle, was the noblewoman Tripia Putagio. She and her brother, Guido, siblings of the powerful podestá of Bologna, Roland Putagio, found Segarelli's message appealing and a viable avenue of piety.[31] According to inquisitorial records from Bologna in 1299, four decades after the Apostles were founded, women from all across central Italy made up nearly forty percent of Segarelli's Order.[32] Nearly twenty-five years after its founding, the chronicle tells of a cohort of women from Modena and Reggio calling themselves Apostolic Sisters (*Sorores Apostolorum*) who followed the ascetic and communal poverty of Segarelli, who met with him, seeking both his approval of their lifestyle and his permission to travel and spread the word about penance and the *vita apostolica*.[33] Many of the women within the Order also apparently tutored other members, including the men, about their lifestyle of apostolic poverty and communalism, to the utter horror of Salimbene who bemoaned that they learn from women that which they teach to men.[34] This level of equality was quite rare and likely a factor that accounted for the surge in female members and supporters.

29 *Cronica*, 1/384.24–33, 404.

30 *Cronica*, 1/386.26–30, 406.

31 *Cronica*, 1/391.3–6, 411. Regarding the family connections to nobility in Bologna, see *Cronica*, 1/378.23–25, 398 and Ferdinand Bernini, "Apostoli e Flagellanti in Parma nel duecento secondo nuovi Documenti," *Religio* 11, 1935, 352–356.

32 Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 325–328.

33 *Cronica*, 2/819.26–820.2, 846.

34 *Cronica*, 1/400.28–29, 422. For Salimbene, the Franciscans' clear separation between men and women, and the virtual absence of the latter, was proof of their superiority. See Merlo, "Salimbene e gli Apostolici," 12–13.

The fact that these Apostolic Sisters hailed from a variety of regional towns and cities clearly indicates the reach of Segarelli's specific brand of apostolic poverty but also that the message resonated with women of various social classes in part because it allowed them to actively work toward their own salvation free from the restraints placed on most female religious expression in the late 13th century. For women of all social classes looking to experience the *vita apostolica* firsthand, they had some opportunities with groups such as the Cistercians or Premonstratensians. Yet one of the key issues for women involved with the more traditional orthodox groups was that their motives and even their very presence was often seen as having the potential to threaten the apparently fragile piety and chastity of their male counterparts, requiring significant regulation and oversight not expected of the men.[35] This negative and degrading attitude towards women's religious experience could partly be responsible for pushing some women to look elsewhere where they might find more autonomy and even equality among movements such as the Waldensians, Beguines, and of course, Segarelli's Apostles.[36]

Perhaps sensing a spiritual need on the part of the female faithful, Obizzo Sanvitale, the bishop of Parma, became a chief proponent of Segarelli's movement, especially of the Apostolic Sisters, who he deemed devout enough to warrant receiving penitential privileges. To assist the Sisters and encourage others to do so as well, the bishop authorized a forty-day penitential deferment to anyone who gave alms to them, as well as specifically requesting that other clerics throughout central Italy support the Sisters' itinerancy

35 See Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: 1995), 75–88; and Brenda M. Bolton, "Mulieres Sanctae" in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: 1976), 141–158. For issues surrounding entrance into convents, see Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 200–201. See also Bolton's discussion of male fears of instability caused by increased female admission, 142–143.

36 Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 122–126; 166; 199–207, 230–231 and Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejection of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: 2000), 31–32; 73–74, address the appeal of the Waldensians, in particular the opportunity for women to participate directly. See Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 200ff on the appeal of the Beguines and Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Oxford: 1998), 75–80 for the roles of women among the Cathars. However, John Arnold has cautioned that it would be a mistake to assume that popular movements, especially heretical ones, were by nature egalitarian with respect to women, since in many groups like the French Cathars, early Waldensians, and Lollards the proportion of women was lower than that of men, while many of their roles were constrained to those of support, rather than as active leaders. See John H. Arnold, "Heresy and Gender in the Middle Ages" in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazzo Karras (Oxford: 2013), 499–503.

through charitable donations.[37] Bishop Sanvitale's support of Segarelli and the Apostolic Sisters offers proof that the group was both respected and considered a legitimate movement through which the laity, both men and women, could express and experience their genuine piety.

4 The Beginning of the End

After more than a quarter century of numerical and geographic growth, the Order of Apostles did ultimately experience a change in ecclesiastical support stemming from a series of Church-wide reforms that aimed to consolidate and provide oversight of numerous lay movements. As early as 1274, the Second Council of Lyons sought to restrain the exponential growth of lay religious groups through the decree *Religionium diversitatem nimiam*, that revived an earlier 1215 Lateran conciliar ban on new orders admitting new members.[38] Because of lax enforcement, many of these groups and even their local ecclesiastical supporters, such as Bishop Sanvitale, did not heed this ban. But, in 1286 Pope Honorius IV issued the bull *Olim felicis recordationis*, which specifically ordered the Apostles to halt their itinerancy, stop adding new members, and promptly enter an established and papally sanctioned order.[39] It did not, however, indicate any doctrinal heterodoxy. Because Segarelli's group continued to ignore the directive, Pope Nicholas IV had to repeat it again four years later in 1290. He dramatically raised the stakes, directing bishops to formally censure the group, use the secular authorities to imprison challengers, and call in provincial inquisitors to examine the disobedient for heresy.[40] Interestingly, this decree did not claim the entirety of the membership of the Apostles held or espoused heretical doctrine, but simply that those who disobeyed should be questioned.

Despite the serious tone of Nicholas IV's decree, the issue must not have been seen as immediately pressing, because another four years passed before any of the Apostles encountered direct ecclesiastical disapproval. In 1294, four

37 Obizzo Sanvitale, *Sorores Apostolorum*, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Diplomatico: Documenti Privati, 41.2488. See Ferdinand Bernini, "Apostoli e Flagellanti in Parma nel duecento secondo nuovi Documenti," *Religio* 11 (1935), 352–356; Carniello, "Gerard Segarelli and the Order of Apostles at Parma and Bologna," 20–21; and Carniello, "Gerard Segarelli as the Anti-Francis," 226–251.

38 Norman Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: 1990), v. 1, 326–327.

39 *Les Registres d'Honorius IV*, ed. Maurice Prou (Paris: 1888), No. 310.

40 *Les Registres de Nicolas IV*, ed. M. Ernst Langlois, 11 (Paris: 1890), No. 4253.

individuals, two men and two women, who may have been members of the Order, were convicted of heresy and burned at the stake in Parma.[41] The existing documents are entirely unclear as to whether the charges were doctrinal or simply a refusal to abide by Church orders, but in the same year, perhaps as a direct result of these executions, Bishop Sanvitale, the once ardent supporter of the Apostles, ordered Segarelli to the episcopal palace, where he was indefinitely imprisoned on charges of heresy.[42] As was the case with the four burned in 1294, although the records indicate Segarelli was interrogated for heresy, they do not state the specific accusations or sentencing. The likely charge was disobedience of ecclesiastical directives, in particular the papal orders to disband and merge with established religious orders. Yet, even with the executions in Parma and the imprisonment of Segarelli, *pro anima* bequests to the Order continued in Bologna that same year, drafted in the Dominican convent there, a further testament to the relative orthodoxy of the Order as a whole.[43] Segarelli remained in the bishop's palace for another six years, but ultimately his fate took a turn for the worse with his continued refusal to disband, leaving him in contempt of papal orders and inquisitorial tribunals, the latter of which ordered his execution. He was then burnt at the stake on July 18, 1300.

Almost immediately after Segarelli's execution, the mantle of the Apostles was taken up by Fra Dolcino, a charismatic and apocalyptic figure who passionately criticized the Church, predicted the violent demise of bishops, cardinals, and the pope, and led a protracted, but ultimately failed, resistance against inquisitors and crusaders.[44] Indeed, though Dolcino led the Apostles for only seven years, compared to Segarelli's forty, his heretical apocalypticism has often overshadowed the orthodox piety of his predecessor and should be seen as a significant break from the *vita apostolica* promoted by Segarelli. Moreover, there seems to be an almost complete absence of apocalyptic thinking on the part of Segarelli, despite Dolcino's insistence on inserting the founder in his end of days timeline and imbuing him with post-mortem apocalyptic significance. Nowhere in Salimbene's writings does Segarelli himself ever espouse a concrete apocalypticism, an exegesis of Revelation, or ruminate on the timing or even coming of the Antichrist. At best, one could argue that his call of "*penitençágite*!" was a form of latent or benign apocalypticism, since the totality

41 *Chronicon Parmense ab anno MXXXVIII usque ad annum MCCCXXXVIII*, ed. Giuliano Bonazzi, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 9, part 9 (Città di Castello: 1902), ll. 10–11, 67.

42 Ibid., ll. 12–15, 67.

43 Carniello, "Gerard Segarelli and the Order of Apostles at Parma and Bologna," 65–66.

44 For a more detailed discussion, see Pierce, *Poverty, Heresy and the Apocalypse*, passim, but especially 95–138.

of the phrase is "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Mt 4:17). In this case, it would imply an unspecified but not necessarily imminent future day of judgment and lacked an apocalyptic immediacy or urgency. It is important to clarify that it was Salimbene himself who directly linked the Apostles to Joachite prophecy and not Segarelli, which demonstrates that apocalyptic theology was not a central part of this apostolic movement; that is until Fra Dolcino asserted his leadership in the immediate aftermath of Segarelli's execution.[45]

5 Fra Dolcino

Very little is known definitively about Dolcino's life before he wrote the first of three apocalyptic letters in 1300.[46] He was a member of the Presbyters, an influential family from Vercelli, some of whom intermarried with the Tornielli family of Romagnano Sesia, the very area in Valsesia where Dolcino ultimately retreated to seek support against inquisitors and crusaders.[47] Written in approximately 1376, Benvenuto da Imola's commentary on Dante's *Divine Comedy* is another source that offers some plausible details of Dolcino's early chronology.[48] Benvenuto claims that Dolcino joined the Apostles around 1290–1291, perhaps in Parma or Bologna, and was a member during the tumultuous decade leading up to Segarelli's execution. After writing his letter "to the faithful" the next month and feeling the inquisitorial pressure closing in, Dolcino and presumably other followers escaped far to the north, in the mountainous valleys near Lake Garda, in places like Arco, Riva, and Cimego, and began an intense campaign of public preaching that involved going door to door in some of the smaller communities.[49]

45 See Carniello, "Gerardo Segarelli as the Anti-Francis," 244–5 and *Cronica*, 1/426.26–427.4, 449.

46 Typical biographies assert that Dolcino was the illegitimate son of a priest from Novara, but that illegitimacy has been thoroughly debunked by Raniero Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 95–104.

47 Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 103–104. Orioli also notes that both families had strong ties to the Ghibelline (imperial) faction of politics in Italy; their anti-papal ideology would have had a significant influence on Dolcino.

48 Benvenuto de Imola, *Comentum super Dantis Aldighherij Comoediam*, ed. J. Lacaita (Florence: 1887), v.2, 332–363.

49 Benvenuto da Imola, *Comentum*, v.3, 359. See also Tavo Burat, "Dolcino e gli Apostolici: La Storia in breve," in *Fra Dolcino e gli Apostolici*, ed. Corrado Mornese and Gustavo Buratti (Rome: 2000), 35–36 and Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 103–114.

The content of this preaching, which can be found in both Dolcino's letters and inquisitorial records, was a mixture of apocalyptic prophecies and intense anticlericalism that marked a clear break with the Segarelli era as the Order shifted into vocal opposition to the Church. Dolcino's apocalypticism, which stemmed from his interpretation of Revelation, divided the history of the Church into a series of ages or eras which grew increasingly more corrupt as the end times approached, and included elements such as persecution of the righteous few and cleansing purge of the wicked. Although Dolcino did not credit him directly, he was clearly influenced by perhaps the most famous medieval apocalyptic thinker, Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202), who envisioned a Trinitarian division of history into three *status*, or ages, that he visually represented as interlocking and overlapping circles.[50] Assigning these ages to periods in history, Joachim claimed that the imminent third and final status heralded the last days, which would see both great tribulations for the Church as well as the rise of a group of spiritual men "who will bear fruit in the last times," and thus whose arrival would act as a sign of the impending apocalypse.[51] The importance of the prophecy of these spiritual men cannot be understated, as the notion of a group with special spiritual knowledge, a sense of divinely-granted authority, and a crucial role in the end times would be an appealing mantle to assume, as evidenced by Salimbene's and, as we shall see, Dolcino's claim to the title.[52] Joachim also introduced the concept of a holy pope that would come to the aid of the Church during the ultimate battle with the antichrist and whose victory over the forces of evil would bring about both the end of these persecutions and the third age.[53] Notably, a crucial element of Joachim's apocalypticism was his steadfast orthodoxy and strict absence of anticlericalism

50 For some of the key works on Joachim, see Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: 1985); Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: 1972); Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: 1969); *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (Stroud: 1999); Stephen E. Wessley, *Joachim of Fiore and Monastic Reform* (New York: 1990); Matthias Riedl, ed., *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore* (Leiden: 2018). For the imagery, see L. Tondelli, M. Reeves, and B. Hirsch-Reich, eds., *Il Libro delle Figure dell' Abate Gioachino da Fiore* (Turin: 1953), Plate XIb.

51 Joachim, *Liber de Concordia*, 2.1.5, 68; 2.1.8, 73.

52 E. Randolph Daniel, "A Re-Examination of Franciscan Joachitism," *Speculum* 43/4, 1968, 671–676; Reeves, *Influence*, 175–190 for the Franciscan claim and 161–174 for the Dominican claim.

53 Regarding the holy pope, see Joachim, *Liber Concordia*, in *Visions of the End*, 135, Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 186–189, and Marjorie Reeves, *Influence*, 46–48, 401–415.

which, though he undoubtedly influenced Fra Dolcino, was clearly not emulated by the latter.[54]

6 Dolcino's Apocalypse

Dolcino's letters, collected by Bernard Gui, indicate both the influence of Joachim's apocalypticism and also the ways in which Dolcino reinterpreted those ideas into his own unique eschatology. Like Joachim, Dolcino envisioned history as divided into sequential *status* or ages, but he pointedly abandoned the Trinitarian approach of the former and instead imagined four ages, with his own being the ultimate age of both tribulation and renewal. He believed that during these ages the Church would go through a series of changes (*mutationes*) in which it went from being "good, virginal, chaste, and suffering persecutions" to "malicious and rich" in his own time which distracted the Church from apostolic purity.[55] In particular, he drew attention to Pope Boniface VIII as the embodiment of this period who, he claimed, was guilty of countless evil deeds, the most egregious of which was the belief that Boniface had manipulated Pope Celestine V, a monk and hermit who lived a life of rigorous poverty, into retiring in 1294 after only six months so he could ascend to the papal throne.[56] This corruption would last until all the wicked clergy would be brutally annihilated sometime within three years of Dolcino's letter of 1300.[57] Then the final development, instigated by Segarelli, would see the Church transformed as "good and poor, suffering persecutions, and reformed according to the apostolic way of life," thus returning it to its pure and original state.[58]

Together the *status* and the *mutationes* indicate the clear influence of Joachim's eschatology but also significant deviations on the part of Dolcino.

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54 Reeves, *Influence*, 28–36, 132; Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, *Epistola prologalis*, in *Visions of the End*, 140 and McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 186–195.

55 *De Secta*, 21: "In primo debebat esse sicut et fuit, bona et virgo et casta et persecutiones passa … In tertio debebat esse, sicut et est vere, maliciosa, dives, et honorata."

56 Ibid.: "[D]e quibus subdit ibidem plurima mala, necnon Bonifacius VIII qui tunc preerat romane Sedi de quo similiter ibidem plurima mala subdit." See Raniero Orioli, "Il Ruolo di Celestino V nell'economica salvifica eresiarca Dolcino da Novara," in *Celestino V e i suoi tempi: Realtà spirituale e realtà politica. Atti del 4 ° Convegno storico internazionale, L'Aquila, 26–27 agosto 1989*, ed. Walter Capezzali (L'Aquila, Italy: 1990), 71–96.

57 *De Secta*, 21.

58 Ibid.: "In quarto debebat esse sicut et iam esse incepit, bona et pauper et persecutiones passa in proprio modo vivendi Apostolico reformata: et ista quarta mutatio fuit incepta per fratrem Gerardum parmensem … et perseverabit perfecta et durabit et fructificabit usque ad finem mundi."

One similarity was the idea that each *status* started off pure, then began to decline only to be followed by a reinvigoration in the next *status*. They also both believed that this renewal would be instigated by a divine or divinely-sent figure. However, Dolcino's alterations mark a substantial departure with the most obvious change being his use of fours instead of threes, which effectively abandons the Trinitarian aspect that was so central to Joachim. Dolcino also appeared to associate the spiritual men of Joachim's third *status* with his own Apostles in what he believed was the current fourth age. Regarding the Apostles, he claimed that "in the last days God had sent and selected this congregation for the salvation of souls, and that God had sent and chosen the one [Dolcino] who was the head of this congregation."[59] The Apostles, these new spiritual men, lived and taught a renewed moral and apostolic lifestyle that was sanctioned by God, one which had begun under Gerardo Segarelli, most beloved by God, and which would persevere until Judgement Day.[60]

Dolcino also deviated from Joachim's apocalypticism and from Segarelli's orthodoxy in his direct criticism of the Church and renunciation of its authority over his group. Whereas Joachim saw the Church as persecuted from the outside, Dolcino envisioned the persecution of the truly faithful coming from within the Church hierarchy itself. In fact, the Order's apostolic poverty is what Dolcino believed set it apart from the wealth and corruption of the bishops, cardinals, and even the Pope and this "purity" on their part justified their refusal to submit to any external authority.[61] They saw themselves as the "perfect poor of Christ" because they renounced all property ownership, relied on others' charity, and refused to accept or even carry money.[62] His concept of apostolic poverty was so strict in fact that ownership of houses and even possessing money itself was absolutely incompatible with this monastic renunciation.[63] Because of this evangelical and apostolic "perfection," the Order asserted

59 *De Secta*, 20: "Quam congregationem asserit in istis diebus novissimis a Deo pro salute animarum specialiter esse missam et electam, et illum qui preest super istam congregationem videlicet se ipsum, quem vocant fratrem Dulcinum, a Deo specialiter esse missum et electum."

60 *De Secta*, 20–21: "et ipsum modum vivendi Apostolicum asserit missum esse a deo in istis temporibus novissimis."

61 *De Secta* 19–20: "[I]pse Dulcinus in principio asserit illam suam congregationem spiritualem esse et propriam in proprio modo vivendi Apostolico et proprio nomine cum paupertate propria, et sine vinculo obedientie exterioris, set cum interiori tantum."

62 *Practica* 5.3.2, 86: "in signum perfectionis evangelice paupertatis … se esse in statu apostolice et evangelice paupertatis et perfectionis."

63 *De Secta*, 21: "[E]t iste est quartus status et ultimus in proprio modo vivendi Apostolico et differt a modo vivendi sancti Francisci et sancti Dominici, quia vita illorum fuit multas habere domos et illuc mendicata deferre, set nos, ait Dulcinus, nec domus habemus, nec

that "only those who are called Apostles are the church of God" and that only they could claim to have "the power that the blessed apostle Peter received from God."[64] Moreover, the Order was specifically sent and chosen by God because all the spiritual power which Christ originally gave to the Church had now been transferred to the Apostles.[65] Finally, Dolcino and the Apostles claimed that Segarelli had been acting on God's behalf to return the Church back to the perfection and poverty of the primitive Church, just as Christ had left it to St. Peter.[66]

This rehabilitation of the Church was necessary, the Apostles argued, because the Church had strayed from its original mission and state of poverty, becoming worldly and wicked. They claimed that no pope had power or authority over them "unless he is as holy as the blessed Apostle Peter, living in absolute poverty and humility."[67] Indeed, the very hostility of papal decrees and inquisitorial tribunals directed against those who tried to live a life of evangelical poverty was proof to the Apostles of the Church's corruption. From top to bottom, they maintained that the Church had become depraved, claiming that all the prelates were "liars and seducers" and that the entire hierarchy, "all the orders of monks, and of priests, deacons, subdeacons, and prelates are a detriment to the Catholic faith."[68] The Church had thus become that which prophets had warned about since the writing of the Book of Revelation, the

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etiam mendicata portare debemus, et propter hoc vita nostra maior est et ultima omnibus medicina."

64 *Practica* 5.3.3, 88: "dicunt quod ipsi soli qui dicuntur apostoli de predicta secta seu congregatione sunt ecclesia Dei et sunt in illa perfectione in qua fuerunt primi apostoli Christi … quod ipsi qui dicunt esse apostolos Christi, et nulli alii, habent potestatem quam habuit a Deo beatus Petrus apostolus."

65 *Practica* 5.3.3, 88: "quod tota illa potestas spiritualis quam Christus dedit Ecclesie ab initio translata est in sectam illorum qui se dicunt apostolos seu de ordine apostolorum."

66 *Practica* 5.3.3, 88: "de predicto Gerardo quod ipse fuerit planta Dei pullilans in radice fidei, in qua Deus cepit reducere ecclesiam suam ad perfectionem et vitam et statum et paupertatem ecclesie primitive, in illo statu in quo Christus commisit ecclesiam beato Petro apostolo."

67 *Practica* 5.3.3, 90: "quod nullus papa Romane ecclesie potest aliquem absolvere nisi esset ita sanctus sicut fuit beatus Petrus apostolus, vivendo in omnimodo paupertate sine proprio et in humilitate."

68 *Practica* 5.3.3, 90: "quod omnes prelati Romane ecclesie, tam majores quam minores, a tempore sancti Silvestri, postquam declinaverunt a modo vivendi priorum sanctorum, sunt prevaricatores et seductores … quod omnes ordines religiosorum et sacerdotum et deachonorum et subdeachonorum et prelatorum sunt ad fidei catholice detrimentum. Item, quod laici non debent nec tenentur dare decimas alicui sacerdoti seu prelato Romane ecclesie qui non sit in tanta perfectione et in tanta paupertate in quanta fuerunt primi apostoli."

great whore of Babylon, by forsaking the apostolic poverty and simplicity of Christ.[69]

Because of this ecclesiastical decline and corruption, Dolcino believed that the only way to save the Church was through a violent, but necessary, divinely-sanctioned purge. Interestingly, despite the violence inherent in the prediction, Dolcino did not claim that either he or his fellow Apostles would partake in the liquidation of the clergy. In fact, he wrote that he and his followers were fleeing and hiding from their persecutors until the time when they would reappear in public and preach openly, once all their adversaries had been exterminated.[70] This purge was to be undertaken by the Last World Emperor who would arise in the Last Days to fight for the true inheritors of Christ's mantle and would clash violently with the corrupted Church, purging it of its wickedness and ultimately allying with a final Holy Pope to defeat the Antichrist and bring about a post-apocalyptic spiritual utopia. Dolcino specifically identified Frederick, current king of Sicily and son of the late king, Peter III of Aragon, as the Emperor who would cleanse the Church.[71] In his letter of 1300, Dolcino predicted that the wicked members of the Church would all be "killed and wiped off the face of the earth by a Divine Sword" wielded by the Emperor who would then turn his vengeance on the pope and "invade and seize Pope Boniface and have him killed along with many others."[72] After destroying all of the true Church's earthly enemies, this Emperor would have a good and effective reign that would last until the arrival of the Antichrist, who would also appear in short order.[73] In Dolcino's prophecy, the Emperor would be aided in this final struggle by a final Holy Pope who was not chosen by the cardinals as usual, since they had been purged, but rather, would be selected directly by God. Together the Last Emperor and the Holy Pope would rule until the end of the world and the defeat of the Antichrist, and the Church would finally be renewed.[74]

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69 *Practica* 5.3.3, 86: "quod ecclesia Romana est illa Babilon meretix magna de qua scribit Johannes in Apocalipsi, que apostatavit a fide Christi."

70 *De Secta*, 20.

71 *De Secta*, 21. See Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 70–76 and 117–121 regarding earlier Last World Emperor prophecies.

72 *De Secta*, 21: "[O]mnes, inquam, supradicti divino gladio exterminabuntur ab imperatore relevato … et occidentur et consumentur per universam terram" and "[Fredericus debet relevari] Bonifacium papam pugnando habere et facere occidi cum aliis occidendis."

73 *De Secta*, 22.

74 *De Secta*, 23. Dolcino also predicted four final popes, with the first and fourth being good, while the second and third were evil. He identified the first with Celestine V and the second with Boniface VII. See *De Secta*, 22–23.

7 Establishing Apostolic Communities

Taken predominantly from his first letter of August 1300, one month after Segarelli's execution, Dolcino's apocalyptic prophecies set up a world of opposing forces, with the pious, poor, and persecuted Apostles on one side and a tyrannical and avaricious Roman Church on the other. With these two locked into a world-ending series of struggles, Dolcino's insistence on a life of apostolic poverty took on an urgency that was lacking under Segarelli, for it required one to take sides in a battle that was imminent. It is this message that Dolcino delivered not only in his letter but also in his popular preaching as he fled north to the mountains and lakes of the Trentino region of northern Italy, particularly the lake town of Riva del Garda, nearby Arco, and Cimego several miles to the west. Dolcino's decision to relocate to this area does not appear to be haphazard or random, as several congregations of Apostles had been established in those areas for quite some time.

Dolcino found crucial support in and around Riva and Arco, enough to allow him and presumably fellow Apostles that followed him from the south to remain in the area for three years, until late 1303, preaching first openly then clandestinely with much success in growing the number of both direct members and supporters. During that time, Dolcino was able to connect with prominent Apostolic leaders, such as the master blacksmith, Albert, who managed a group of Apostles in Cimego, Longinus of Bergamo, Frederick of Novara, Cara de Sellis of Modena, Balderic of Brescia, and Margherita Boninsegna of Arco.[75] Whether Dolcino knew or had made contact with these leaders prior to his arrival is unclear, but their presence in the area is significant as it indicates both the wide geographic reach, organization, and pan-gender appeal of the Apostles. Dolcino's preaching in the triangular area between Garda, Arco, and Cimego was popular enough to draw in both new members and supporters, including men and women of various classes, much like Segarelli had done in Parma several decades earlier. According to the surgeon Boninsegna of Arco, member of a wealthy and influential Arco family and the brother of Margherita, he stated in his deposition before a much-later inquisitorial tribunal in 1332 that Dolcino was "received by many because he appeared a good man and spoke beautifully, and he had a Bible and preached the Gospel, and spoke of the future, and many followed him." Regarding the Apostles' widespread popularity, he added that "there was not a good person in Arco who did not receive them, because of the sanctity they claimed and their public

75 *De Secta*, 22; See also *Acta Sancta Officii Bononie*, eds. Lorenzo Paolini and Raniero Orioli (Rome: 1982), 408.

preaching."[76] Similar statements about the popular reception of the Apostles can be found in the inquisitorial trial records from Bologna. In August 1303, Gerardinus, the rector of St. John de Monte Marvo, admitted that he was quite familiar with the various Apostles and their preaching, listing off the names of many key members such as Zacharia of St. Agata, Cara de Sellis of Modena, and Sylva of Trent. Gerardinus stated that "they were good people, and he had conversations and friendship with them, and believed their words and received them in his house."[77] Interestingly, most of those mentioned by Gerardinus would travel from Bologna to meet and stay with other Apostolic leaders throughout the Trentino area, Dolcino in particular.[78]

While there, the Apostles continued to make a good impression on the populace through their preaching and their pious lifestyle, adding both new members and followers but also gaining supporters, many of whom were themselves important and influential people in the area. Among their supporters were several prominent women from Riva, including Domina Monda, a pharmacist, her sister, Rivana, wife of a notary, and Floriana, wife of a doctor. These women, Monda in particular, were the main focus of a later inquisition, in the winter of 1332–1333, that was responsible for rooting out Dolcinian sympathies thirty years after the movement's leadership was annihilated in Valsesia.[79] Though they did not embrace the apostolic lifestyle of Dolcino, nor did they appear to preach or teach any of the order's doctrines, they nevertheless opened their homes to Dolcino, Alberto, and other Apostles allowing them safe places to congregate.[80] Indeed, the fact that inquisitors felt the need to examine numerous residents of Riva and Arco decades later is a testament to

76 *Processo Trentino*, in A. Segarizzi, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Città di Castello: 1907) volume 9, part 5, 80–81: "[Dulcinus] recipiebatur a multis, quia videbatur bonus homo et dicebat pulcra verba et habebat bibliam et exponebat evangelia et dicebat de futuris … adhuc nesciebatur quod essent ita mali homines, quia multi recipiebant eos nec fuit quasi bonus homo in Archo qui non reciperet eos propter sanctitatem, quam pretendebant, et quia publice predicabant in Archo."

77 *Acta Sancti Officii Bononie*, 385: "et predictos et predictas credidit et credebat bonos homines esse et cum eis habuit conversationem et amiciciam et credebat verbis eorum er receptavit eos in domo sua."

78 *Acta Sancti Officii Bononie*, 397–398.

79 Graziano Riccadonna, "Quattro Donne: Le Donne nell'eresia Dolciniana dei processi Rivani," in *Fra Alberto da Cimego e Margherita La Bella: Settecentesimo anno del rogo di Fra Dolcino*, eds. Graziano Riccadonna and Marco Zulberti (Arco: 2009), 73–75.

80 See *Processo Trentino*, n. 4, 5, 9, 18–19, 33, 35–39, 80–81. This assistance is strikingly similar to that discussed by Delfina Nieto-Isabel among the contemporary heretical Beguins of Languedoc, where a statistically significant number of women were central to maintaining the group's network through material support and providing shelter to members. See Delfina Nieto-Isabel, *Communities of Dissent: Social Network Analysis of Religious*

the longevity of support for the Apostles throughout the region, though much more work needs to be done regarding the role and function of these female supporters of the movement.

The sheer number of women mentioned in the trial records in Trentino and Bologna, as either followers or supporters, is a clear indication that not only was the Order's *vita apostolica* still appealing to women, but that the Order itself was inclusive of them, as women were treated as equals, even preaching publicly.[81] Sister Cara de Sellis of Modena was one of the most notable examples, repeatedly appearing in the trial records as being a key leader alongside Dolcino, as well as preaching and teaching the doctrines of the Order.[82] Margherita Boninsegna was another key member of the Order's leadership and, according to many sources, an upper-class woman, possibly nobility, who had left a convent to join the Apostles after hearing Alberto and Dolcino preaching.[83] Not simply a follower, Margherita became one the three key leaders and preachers, along with Dolcino and Longinus of Bergamo, when the Order fled Trentino in 1304. Much like Tripia Putagio, who had become an apostolic sister during Segarelli's tenure, Margherita's active role exemplified the continued support and participation of wealthier women for whom the Order offered religious autonomy and self-determination, and the opportunity to actively work toward their own salvation outside of the repressive and misogynistic system of the Western Church.[84] According to Marina Benedetti, the Apostles were thus well-known for being an open mix of men

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Dissident Groups in Languedoc in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (Doctoral Thesis, University of Barcelona: 2018), 179–217.

81 For key women in the movement, see *Acta Sancti Officii Bononie*, 380, 384–385, 397–398, 404; Corrado Mornese, "Le Donne nella rivoluzione apostolica," in *Fra Dolcino e gli Apostolici tra Eresia, Rivolta e Roghi*, eds. Corrado Mornese and Gustavo Buratti (Rome: 2000), 190–202. While most discussions of Margherita Boninsegna of Arco are patronizing and dismissive, for a thorough analysis of Margherita, see Marina Benedetti, "Margherita 'La Bella?' La Costruzione di un' immagine tra storia e letteratura," *Studi Medievali* 111 (2009), 105–131.

82 *Acta Sancti Officii Bononie*, 385. In his 1303 deposition, Rolandinus notes that Cara traveled to Trentino with Dolcino and stayed with him while there, *Acta Sancti Officii Bononie*, 404. See also, *Acta Sancti Officii Bononie*, 380, 391, 407, 665.

83 *Historia*, 11; 12; *De Secta*, 22; Benvenuto, *Comentum*, v. 3, 361.

84 See Kathyrn Green, "The Joys of Heresy: Benefits for Women in Medieval Heretical Sects," in *Reading Heresy: Religion and Dissent in Literature and Art*, eds. Gregory Erickson and Bernard Schweizer (Berlin: 2017), 95–96. This involvement of women from wealthier families mirrors that of Cathar women in Orvieto and Florence that Carol Lansing has argued broke with traditional gendered expectations and actively embraced religious autonomy. See Carol Lansing, *Power and Purity: Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (Oxford: 2001), 118–119.

and women, uncommon among orthodox groups at the time, where women had a visible presence and high leadership positions.[85] This equality was both in keeping with the Order's strict egalitarianism as well as a feature that made it widely popular.

A confluence of several factors may help explain how the Apostles thrived and spread in the region for several years, especially after the trial and execution of Segarelli and the aggressively apocalyptic first letter of Dolcino. First, members practiced what they preached by living a lifestyle of poverty and communal living, including the movement's leaders, as Dolcino and Alberto of Cimego were known to preach barefoot in St. Michael's near the main city gate of Riva where many came to hear them.[86] Staying in the homes of supporters, wandering barefoot, and preaching were all hallmarks of their piety and one of the reasons for their extensive support. Moreover, the fact that they were allowed to preach openly in a church indicates that they had at least some support from the local leadership, as the sources make no mention of any opposition at the time. Second, much like the early years under Segarelli, their reputation as pious and good men was helped by this support of local ecclesiastics. Indeed, it appears that several priests in the region were not only sympathetic to poverty heresy in general, as the Cathars had also made inroads into the area several decades earlier, but some might have actually been Cathars themselves.[87] Third, the political situation throughout the region was notable for its instability, resulting in relative independence from episcopal and seignorial control that allowed the local families and institutions much more autonomy. For example, though the bishop of Trent had controlled the area at one time, Meinhard II, the count of Tyrol, successfully subjugated the bishopric and via the Treaty of Bolzano in 1284 gained control of the region. This change to a more distant leadership left places like Riva to their own devices and fostered significant independence economically, politically, and religiously. Significantly, when Bishop Filippo Bonacolsi tried to invade Trentino with an army in 1301, he was stopped by the counts of Tyrol and in fact was not even allowed to fully return to the bishop's palace in Trent until early 1303. As a consequence, episcopal and especially inquisitorial activity was significantly curtailed in Trentino.[88] Moreover, Dolcino's preaching about

85 Benedetti, "Margherita 'La Bella?'" 115, 118.

86 *Processo Trentino*, 8, 83.

87 R. Manselli, "Le vicende dell'eresia catara nel territorio gardesano," in *Il lago di Garda: Storia di una comunità lacuale, II, in Atti del Congresso internazionale promosso dall'Ateneo di Salò*, (Ateneo di Salò: 1969), 19–24.

88 Such a result may have actually been desired, since Maynard and his sons had a hostile relationship with the Church, especially considering the father had been under

the dangers of ecclesiastical corruption and lust for worldly power would have immediately resonated with the locals who were witnessing it firsthand with Bonacolsi's armed invasion. One argument that accounts for the support of the Apostles is that the middle to upper-class bourgeoisie of Riva such as notaries, doctors, and merchants, saw Dolcino as a tool to help maintain their political liberty at the expense of the Church, while those of Arco, mostly farmers who were little more than serfs, gravitated to the idea of personal liberty embedded in Dolcino's apocalypticism.[89] Taken together, these factors account for how the Apostles could thrive for close to three years without hindrance.

The three years of stability and growth for the Apostles in Trentino came to an abrupt end in 1303 with the return to power of Bishop Bonacolsi, himself an ardent exterminator of heresy.[90] In the same year, the inquisitor Aiulfo di Vicenza arrived. His harshness and ruthless efficiency would strike at the leadership of the Apostles, driving them from the area and into the far reaches of Valsesia and their doom. Described as a man without scruples and a merciless judge, Aiulfo descended on Riva, Arco, and other towns in the area and swiftly dragged people in for questioning in late 1303.[91] The result was the public burning of three people for heresy, a man and two women, one of whom was the wife of Albert of Cimego. There is some debate about the identity of the man and the second woman, but one prominent theory is that they were Alberto himself and Cara de Sellis, who essentially disappear from the records after that point, having been mentioned repeatedly in various proceedings.[92] These proceedings were matched by concurrent ones in Bologna, which resulted in the burning of Zacharia di St. Agata in December 1303, and appear to have been part of a resurgent effort to exterminate all branches of the Apostles wherever they had spread in northern Italy.[93] Faced with this revival of inquisitorial

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excommunication just a few years earlier due to their rivalry. See Andreas Castagnetti "Le comunità della regione gardense fra potere centrale, governi cittadini e autonomie nel medioevo (secoli VIII–XIV)" in *Un lago, una civiltà: Il lago di Garda*, ed. G. Borelli (Verona: 1983), 1, 87ff.

89 Graziano Riccadonna, "Quattro Donne," 66–67.

90 Orioli, *Venit Perfidus Heresiarcha*, 93–94.

91 Marco Zulberti, "Dante e Dolcino nell'anno finale 1303: Ipotesi di un contatto tra Arco e Riva del Garda," in *Fra Alberto da Cimego e Margherita La Bella: Settecentismo anno dal rogo di Fra Dolcino*, eds. Graziano Riccadonna and Marco Zulberti (Arco: 2009), 133. See also Mariano D'Alatri, "Rileggendo gli Atti del Processo Trentino dell'inverno 1332–1333," in *Eretici e Inquisitori: Studi e Documenti* (Rome: 1986), 1, 244.

92 Zulberti, "Dante e Dolcino nell'anno finale 1303," 133–139; Riccadonna, "Quattro Donne," 72. Dolcino mentions him in his second letter of December 1303, but his references are as though Alberto was still alive. Interestingly, Alberto is not mentioned in the Valsesian sources, in particular the *Historia*.

93 Zulberti, "Dante e Dolcino nell'anno finale 1303," 134–137.

pressure, Dolcino, Margherita, and several other Apostles retreated first to Cimego but ultimately abandoned the region altogether, heading west into Lombardy, and the even more remote mountains of Valsesia.

8 Valsesia

Due to the intensity of the inquisitorial proceedings in and around Riva and the execution of accused heretics, in early 1304 Dolcino and a number of Apostles once again fled to a remote mountainous area, this time along the Sesia river valley some fifty kilometers north of Novara and Vercelli. It was also Dolcino's birthplace, which meant he was likely familiar with both the isolated geography and especially the volatile politics of Valsesia. Both factors would aid the Apostles as they sought to avoid the snares of the inquisitors. Additionally, they were welcomed by many of the small towns and villages, a welcome that extended to armed support when the bishop of Vercelli invaded the area with a crusading army. Dolcino's dual message of apostolic poverty and ecclesiastical corruption struck a chord with the Valsesians, as it had with those of Trentino, since many of the farmers already lived a communal lifestyle and also had experienced the greed and corruption of clerics and nobles that was a centerpiece of his preaching.

Lower and Upper Valsesia are vastly different from one another in terms of geography. By the early 14th century, most of the key cities of the area were found in the flatlands, and included the powerful, and often rival, cities of Vercelli and Novara. By contrast, the further upriver one traveled, the area shifted from these large cities to fortified towns like Gattinara, to much smaller towns like Varallo, and ultimately to isolated villages like Scopa and Campertogno. This difference was a product of the landscape itself, for after Varallo the valley narrowed considerably and was surrounded on both sides by incredibly steep cliffs and virtually impassable mountains, limiting the physical size of the villages and keeping the number of inhabitants quite small. In terms of population density, in 1217 there were probably thirty total communities in the whole region of Valsesia, with the combined population of Upper and Lower at around five thousand, most of whom resided in the cities of Vercelli and Novara.[94]

The two regions were also drastically different from each other economically. Vercelli and Novara were significant cities in northern Italy, with cathedrals, basilicas, a university (Vercelli), and bustling marketplaces. They were

94 Corrado Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana e Resistenza Montanara* (Rome: 2002), 34.

interconnected with both the trade and politics of places like Milan, Turin, and Genoa. At the other end of the economic spectrum, the villages and hamlets of Upper Valsesia had a much simpler rustic agricultural economy that revolved around their flocks and herds, growing what crops they could, and collecting firewood for the harsh winters. The limited trade they engaged in, usually only extending so far as Varallo, was used for taxes and tithes, or to purchase tools.[95] Unlike the cities of Vercelli and Novara, the standard of living in Upper Valsesia was relatively poor and in some cases barely above subsistence.[96] Because of their precarious economic situation and the remote nature of many of the villages, the Upper Valsesians lead a much more communal and interdependent lifestyle with one another, and thereby formed a unique, collective identity that was vastly different from and often in opposition to that of their more urbanized neighbors.[97] Moreover, such poverty, communalism, and independence were the very same traits that made up the core identity of the Apostles, and thus gave the Valsesians and the heretics something in common.

Much like Trentino, the political situation of Valsesia saw different groups vying for power, an instability which would become advantageous to Dolcino and the Apostles.[98] The three powerful groups that competed for control over Valsesia were the rural counts of Biandrate and the communes of both Vercelli and Novara.[99] For generations, these three struggled with each other regarding feudal dues and control over the region. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Biandrate, Vercelli, and Novara would enter into various alliances with and against one another as they contested for supremacy, always at the expense of Valsesia.[100] Ironically, the end result was the unexpected independence and autonomy of the Valsesians who, for generations, openly rebelled against such attempts to subjugate them.[101] The typical pattern was

95 Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 106.

96 Francesco Cognasso, *Storia di Novara* (Novara: 1971), 160; Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 100.

97 Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 100–101.

98 For a more in-depth analysis of the political turmoil in Valsesia, see Jerry B. Pierce, "Autonomy, Dissent and the Crusade Against Fra Dolcino in Fourteenth-Century Valsesia," in *Religion, Power, and Resistance from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries: Playing The Heresy Card*, eds. Karen Bollemann, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Cary J. Nederman (New York: 2014), 195–213.

99 Cognasso, *Storia di Novara*, 124; Maria Giovanna Virgili, "I possessi dei Biandrate nei Secoli Xi–xiv," *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, 62, n. 2, 1974, 639–649, 654–661.

100 Carlo Guido Mor, *Carte Valsesiane fino al Seculo xv* (Turin: 1933), xi, n. 24–25, 50–56.

101 Mornese, *Fra Dolcino*, 23–24. See also Alberto Bossi, *Fra Dolcino, gli Apostolici e la Valsesia* (Borgosesia: 1973), 69–87; Alberto Bossi, "Fra Dolcino e i Valsesiani," *Novarien* 5, 1973, 41–49; Grado Giovanni Merlo, "Fra Dolcino e i Movimenti di Rivolta Contadina," in *Storia della Società Italiana: La Crisi del Sistema Comunale*, eds. Giovanni Cherubini, Franco della Peruta, Ettore Leporé, Giorgio Mori, Giulano Procacci and Rosario Villari (Milan:

an attempt to impose tax burdens and political restrictions, such as installing a *podestà* to administer Valsesia, paid for by taxes extracted from the Valsesians themselves and building fortifications there, for which the Valsesians had to provide funds, followed almost immediately by armed rebellion.[102] Their continued resistance was successful enough that in 1275 the Treaty of Gozzano was negotiated which granted autonomy to the Valsesians, including freedom from feudal control and the permanent expulsion of the Biandrate.[103] Over the next two decades, the Valsesians successfully thwarted attempts to undermine their independence by counts and even the bishop of Vercelli.[104] But the situation began to change in August 1303, with the appointment of the ultra-conservative bishop, Raniero Avogadro, who had plans to reclaim former feudal privileges in his diocese, of which Valsesia was a part. When Dolcino arrived in the diocese shortly thereafter, an explosive clash was inevitable. In fact, the arrival of inquisitors and crusaders would violate the treaty and subvert the hard-earned autonomy of the Valsesians, virtually compelling them to fight.

9 Beginnings and Endings

When Dolcino, Margherita, Longino, and a small group of Apostles, both men and women, arrived in the Lower Valsesia communities of Gattinara and Serravalle in 1304, they were greeted with the same enthusiasm and support they had experienced in Riva, Cimego, Bologna, Parma, and other locales in northern Italy.[105] As in Trentino, Dolcino's message of ecclesiastical corruption and his insistence that powerful Church leaders had strayed from the simplicity and poverty of Christ and the Apostles with their wealth and lust for power would have been well-received by his audience who had first-hand experience with the ambitions of Bishop Avogadro. In Serravalle, the Apostles were offered food and shelter and they remained there preaching for a short time, until the bishop and inquisitors learned of their presence. With the help of the locals, Dolcino's group was able to escape capture by the inquisitors and they fled Lower Valsesia altogether, heading for the isolation of far Upper Valsesia and

1982), pt. 2, vol. 7, 281–299; Paola Guglielmotti, *Comunità e Territorio: Villaggi del Piemonte Medievale* (Rome: 2001), 183–191.

102 Mor, *Carte Valsesiane*, n. 50, 118–127; Federico Tonetti, *La Valsesia Descritta e Illustrata nei Principali Fatti e Avvenimenti della sua Storia* (Varallo: 1911), 300; Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 54–57.

103 Mor, *Carte Valsesiane*, n. 56, 149–151.

104 Ferdinando Gabotto, "Biella e i Vescovi di Vercelli," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 18 (1896), 24–26.

105 *Historia*, 4.

the remoteness of the mountains.[106] Their preaching clearly struck a chord, since any assistance risked imprisonment, torture, and possibly execution. Indeed the rector of the church in Serravalle and several others were rounded up by the inquisitors, interrogated, and condemned. Their fate is unclear from the sources, but since the *Historia* mentions the podestà of Vercelli, it is likely that they were handed over to the secular authorities for imprisonment or execution.[107]

According to the *Historia*, Dolcino and his group of Apostles traveled far up the Sesia river, well past Borgosesia and Varallo, and high into the far reaches of the valley near the village of Campertogno. They had been summoned by Milano da Sola, a wealthy farmer of Campertogno, who welcomed them into his home, where they stayed for many months. Once there, many people traveled from various parts to listen to Dolcino's teachings, though the exact number is unclear.[108] His audience was composed of some local Valsesians such as Milano, but considering the extensive interconnected network of Apostles throughout northern Italy, it is also likely that members of the Order from other cities made the trek there as well. After several months in Campertogno, Milano led Dolcino and his remaining followers high up in the mountains above the village, to a more secure place called Mount Balma where they built many small homes and shelters, and there they lived for several more months, hoping to wait out the purge of their ecclesiastical enemies that had been predicted by Dolcino.[109] By the time Dolcino and the Apostles were forced to relocate for a third time, they had been in Valsesia for at least a year and half, and throughout that time they had enjoyed the support of the Valsesians, some of whom became disciples while others did not join the movement but offered support in terms of hospitality, food, and shelter, precisely as those in Trentino had done.

The summer of 1305 brought with it many changes to the political and ecclesiastical landscape, especially in Vercelli, changes which drastically altered the fortunes of the Apostles and set them on a trajectory toward destruction. Chief among these changes was the return to power in Vercelli of the Avogadro family, seen most conclusively in the installation of Raniero Avogadro as bishop in 1303, who sought to increase his power and influence throughout his bishopric. One of the ways he attempted to do so was by trying to reassert control over Valsesia and the most effective means, seemingly, was to purge it of pernicious

106 Ibid., 4.
107 Ibid., 4.
108 Ibid., 4.
109 Ibid., 4.

heretics and their supporters under the guise of defending the Catholic faith and the Christian people who he claimed were under assault.[110] Avogadro then assembled what the *Historia* claims was a great army manned by many from the diocese of Vercelli to eradicate the small group of Apostles from their mountaintop refuge, but somehow this episcopal army failed in its objective, and the Apostles fled during the night.[111] Stymied, the bishop withdrew his forces from Upper Valsesia in order to reassess his strategy and figure out where the heretics had disappeared to. What he did not know was that the Apostles had simply relocated to the other side of the river atop a different mountain peak, the *Parete Calva* (Bald Wall), that towered above the confluence of the Sorba and Sesia rivers, protected by immense cliffs and virtually inaccessible. Once again, the Apostles constructed small houses or shelters on the forested summit of the *Parete Calva*.[112]

At this point, the narrative of the Apostles as told in the *Historia* takes a rather fantastical trajectory that ranges from extreme exaggeration of the number of followers to unbelievable scenarios of violence and loss of public support, all likely done to minimize both the bishop's failure to capture Dolcino and undermine the very real alliance they had with the Valsesians. First, the *Historia* claims that during this period atop the *Parete Calva*, numerous men and women flocked to join the Apostles, eventually reaching more than 1400. Clearly, such a staggering number of heretics would pose a dire threat to the Church and warrant an immediate response; except that the number is demonstrably false and exaggerated, as the actual physical area at the top of cliffs cannot accommodate over a thousand people, nor was there even close to that many inhabitants.[113] The real number, probably closer to 400, was a mix of Valsesian supporters and members of the Order that traveled from Emilia, Lombardy, and other nearby regions.

The second spurious claim was that Dolcino and his followers raided villages up and down the Sesia river, attacking Varallo in particular. According to the *Historia*, when the people of Varallo and other Valsesians tried to resist, the Apostles attacked them with all kinds of weapons, including rocks, killing many and taking captives back to the *Parete Calva* to be ransomed, including even the podestà of Varallo himself. They then destroyed the area around

110 Ibid., 4. See also Francesco Cognasso, *Storia di Novara* (Novara: 1992), 299–304.

111 Ibid., 4.

112 Ibid., 4.

113 Ibid., 4. For a discussion of the spatial and population limits see Corrado Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 34–35, 109–111, 123–124; Cognasso, *Storia di Novara*, 299; Rosaldo Ordano, "Dolcino," *Bollettino Storico Vercellese* 1 (1972) 28. According to Mornese, the total population of Upper Valsesia in 1305 was likely only around 500.

Varallo, plundered the churches, and set fire to the land, a devastation so complete that a ten-mile area was depopulated and any survivors not captured fled as refugees.[114] Just as terrible, the Apostles also either killed or ransomed any random Christian they found.[115] However, there are numerous issues with this narrative. First, it goes against every action Dolcino and the Apostles previously took in the face of opposition or persecution. When Segarelli was executed, Dolcino fled to Trentino. When authorities burned three Apostles in Garda, the group fled to Lower Valsesia. When inquisitors tracked them to Serravalle, Dolcino escaped to Campertogno. When the bishop of Vercelli tried to capture them on Mount Balma, they fled by night to the *Parete Calva*. Clearly, confrontation was not part of their *modus operandi*. Second, why would Dolcino attack Valsesians, when they had been offering nothing but support since their arrival in 1304? Third, what purpose would ransom serve a group of people who preached poverty and the rejection of wealth? The likely answer is that the attack on Varallo was not undertaken by the Apostles but by the Upper Valsesians, and the key piece of evidence is the repeated references to the podestà of Varallo, a member of the noble Brusati family who was recently installed by the Guelph bishop of Novara, in violation of the Treaty of Gozzano. The presence of the podestà and the arrival of inquisitors and mercenaries under the bishop of Vercelli were egregious violations of the autonomy that the Valsesians had quite literally fought for for over a century, and vehement, armed resistance would be in keeping with their prior rebellions.[116]

Despite the attack on Varallo, or perhaps because of it, Bishop Avogadro returned with more mercenaries to blockade the *Parete Calva* and starve out the Apostles. His plan worked too well, so that by March 1306, Dolcino, the Apostles, and their supporters, perhaps 400 at most, were critically low on food but managed to escape from the *Parete Calva*. In the middle of the night, they abandoned their refuge and miraculously made their way through high mountains, unknown paths, and deep snow, arriving far south on Monte Rubello in the steep hills above the village of Trivero.[117] Having escaped Avogadro again, the Apostles and the Valsesians who accompanied them, presumably to flee retribution from the attack on Varallo, set up more shelters atop Rubello, where they would remain for another year. Avogadro, for his part, was undeterred

114 *Historia*, 5.

115 *Historia*, 5.

116 Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 119–126; Franco Dessilani, "La situazione politica del Novarese e della Valsesia all'epoca di Dolcino," in *Dolcino: Storia, Pensiero, Messaggio. Atti del Convegno* (Novara: 2007), 39–46. For the Brusati/Novara connection see De Haan, "Le Setta degli Apostolici e i suoi Capi," 74, n. C.

117 *Historia*, 5.

by his failure to capture the heretics and he made the fateful decision to seek the assistance of the newly-elected Pope Clement V, who granted his request by proclaiming an official crusade against the heretics and offering plenary indulgences to those who directly fought in or aided the crusade.[118] Though it took time to organize, with papal and professional military support, the bishop began a long and complicated siege of Monte Rubello that blockaded the area with numerous garrisons and fortifications, lasting until March 1307. By then, the Apostles and their Valsesian supporters were so starved and weakened that the bishop's crusaders were able to overcome their defenses and slaughter virtually every last one of them, sparing Dolcino, Margherita, and Longino for a much more gruesome fate.[119] These final three Apostles were imprisoned and tortured for three months before Pope Clement V ordered them handed over to secular authorities.[120] Margherita and Longino were both publicly burned alive in Biella, while Dolcino was sent to Vercelli, publicly tortured in a hideous and hours-long fashion, then consigned to the flames. When it was over, the leaders of the Apostles and the Order itself were gone, consumed by the very apocalyptic flames Dolcino had predicted, a violent end to a movement that lasted over a half century.

10 Conclusion

The extreme measures taken by the Church to hunt down and eliminate Dolcino and the Order of Apostles are ample evidence that the movement had become widely popular and eventually posed an existential threat to ecclesiastical power and control. From its foundation under Gerardo Segarelli in 1260, the Order attracted widespread support in terms of those who joined and chose to embrace the poverty of the *vita apostolica*, and those who offered support through donations, food, and the use of their homes.[121] They received assistance from various classes, including nobles such as the Putagio, and perhaps most importantly from ecclesiastics such as Bishop Sanvitale of Parma who supported the Order from its inception. Similar support occurred across northern Italy, most notably in Trentino and Valsesia, even after Segarelli's execution in 1300. Part of the appeal was that the Order offered a means to actively work towards one's own salvation in a straightforward and simple manner,

118 *Historia*, 6–7.
119 *Historia*, 11.
120 *Historia*, 12.
121 Mornese, *Eresia Dolciniana*, 12.

especially prior to the apocalyptic theology of Dolcino. The Apostles were also a movement that promoted real egalitarianism, by shedding all notions of class distinctions among its members and allowing women full and equal roles in the Order, like Margherita Boninsegna and Cara de Sellis, and not the segregated and cloistered experience of traditional women's religious orders.

Yet the question remains as to how much Dolcino's apocalypticism influenced people to join or support the Order. Once Segarelli was executed and members began to be tried for heresy, the tone of the Order underwent a dramatic shift as it moved from simple orthodox apostolic poverty to radical heterodox anticlericalism. Dolcino's letters pointedly laid out his eschatological timeline, with its declaration of different *status* and *mutationes*, its identification of figures and events with those in the book of Revelation, and the coming tribulations and battles of Armageddon. One likely answer is that the specific apocalyptic minutiae were of concern only to the most ardent believers, while the concepts of apostolic poverty and church corruption were more appealing and accessible to the majority of supporters. In fact, poverty and penance were the crux of the Order's preaching from its inception when it grew significantly, both numerically and geographically. Even without the apocalypticism, the critique of ecclesiastical power, wealth, corruption would have resonated with audiences, who witnessed fiscal abuses of the supposedly poor mendicant orders, papal machinations that seemed more about political supremacy than apostolic humility, and the violent elimination of those who would question such actions. By that reasoning, supporting the Apostles would thus be a way to hopefully help the Church return to its apostolic roots. Similarly, the inhabitants of Trentino and Valsesia clearly acknowledged ecclesiastical overreach, but many had their own, more political motivations for checking ecclesiastical power that was directly related to their recent struggles for independence and self-governance. For them, Dolcino's apocalypticism was perhaps less important in garnering their support than his vocal opposition to a Church they all perceived to be more focused on worldly gains rather than spiritual ones. Taking all these motivations into account, it is clear that the Order of the Apostles was widely popular with many different groups, rich and poor, men and women, urban and rural, precisely because they could offer each of them what they wanted most.

Though annihilated by crusading forces, Dolcino's legacy actually continues to the present day. His opposition to tyrannical leadership and corrupting wealth made him seem like a medieval predecessor to the struggles of the working class in the early days of the Industrial Revolution. In 1877, for example, striking workers from a nearby textile mill assembled atop Monte

Rubello where Dolcino and the Apostles made their last stand, symbolically associating themselves with their plight. On International Workers' Day, 1 May 1890, an enormous red banner was unveiled on Rubello. Five years later, over 100 socialists gathered on the mountain for a meeting to create a newspaper, which they initially called *Monte Rubello*. (They were obliged to change the name because a different socialist newspaper had already claimed it). To mark the 600th anniversary of the "martyrdom" of Dolcino and the Apostles, a group of Valsesian and Biellese socialists erected a twelve-meter-high obelisk in their honor, complete with plaques bearing verses from Dante's *Inferno* that warned Dolcino to stock up on provisions to outlast the blockades, in an event attended by thousands.[122] The obelisk remained until 1927 when Benito Mussolini's Blackshirts dynamited the monument due to its message and promotion of resistance. Almost fifty years later, in 1974, a new monument was built out of the ruins of the original, with members of the alpine Resistance against fascism in attendance. Every year since, on the second Sunday in September, an annual festival in honor of Dolcino and the Apostles is held at this monument, with picnics, lectures, and visits to key sites nearby. Numerous plaques and monuments honoring Dolcino and the Apostles also have been erected in other historically significant places, including many of those mentioned in this chapter.[123] This memorialization of Dolcino and the Apostles reveals their continued popularity and the strength of their appeal to diverse groups both in the late Middle Ages and those well over 700 years later.

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122 Dante, *Inferno*, XXVIII, 55–60.

123 For a comprehensive catalogue of newspapers, journals, monuments, and events associated with memorializing Dolcino, see Corrado Mornese, *Maledetto Dolcino! Storia di una Memoria Scandolosa* (Novara: 2007); and Elena Rotelli, *Fra Dolcino e gli Apostolici nella Storia e nella Tradizione* (Turin: 1979).

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CHAPTER 3

A Partial Apocalypse? Eschatology and the Bianchi Devotions of 1399

Alexandra R.A. Lee

The medieval populace was frequently moved to participate in processions. These could be as part of annual liturgical feast days, like Easter or Christmas, or those local to a specific town, like the feast of the Girdle of the Virgin at Prato. Alongside these fixed festivals, the Middle Ages also saw a multitude of more fleeting popular religious revivals which swept through regions and even across countries. The motivation for participation in many of these movements was a belief that the end of the world was imminent, and thus a public display of religious devotion was necessary either to stay the apocalypse or to ensure salvation. Early movements such as the Children's Crusade of 1212 and Flagellants of 1260 set somewhat of a template for later revivals such as the Shepherd's Crusades and the Flagellant movement after the Black Death, as well as local revivals like that led by Venturino da Bergamo in 1335.[1] These movements often centred on years which would mark a transition to a new period.[2] The Bianchi movement of 1399 fell on the cusp of the fifteenth century, and this chapter explores the incorporation and significance of apocalyptic narratives in this popular religious revival.

The Bianchi processed throughout the northern and central Italian peninsula in the summer and autumn of 1399.[3] The movement began in Genoa in

1 I would like to thank Mark Empey for suggestions with Irish source materials, and David D'Avray for help with Latin translations. Any errors which remain are my own. I would also like to thank the Archivio Apostolico Vaticano for providing me with a digital copy of a folio from Armarium LIV, t. 25. William F. MacLehose, *"A Tender Age": Cultural Anxieties over the Child in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: 2008), Chapter Four; Gary Dickson, "The Flagellants of 1260 and the Crusades," *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989): 227–67, at 228; Malcolm Barber, "The Pastoureaux of 1320," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32, no. 2 (1981), 143–66; *Il movimento dei Disciplinati nel settimo centenario dal suo inizio* (*Perugia, 1260*) (Perugia: 1962); Roisin Cossar, *The Transformation of the Laity in Bergamo, 1265–c.1400* (Brill, 2006), 163–67.

2 For more on millenarian groups and their characteristics, see e.g., James A. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2014), 12.

3 Daniel Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, NY: 1993); Alexandra R.A. Lee, *The Bianchi of 1399 in Central Italy: Making Devotion Local* (Leiden: 2021).

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July of that year, spreading in the directions of Rome and Venice. Participants would either join nine-day, circular itinerant processions, or would remain within their hometown for an intra-urban alternative. The processions were closely connected to the contemporaneous outbreak of plague, although this connection is somewhat complex.[4] The main link is through the origin narratives associated with the movement: the *tre pani* story or story of the three loaves explicitly tells of the death of a third of humankind through plague for nonparticipation in the processions. The book story is less explicit about the consequences for humanity, although Capperledis' tale has a significant amount of apocalyptic imagery and a warning of impending destruction. The threat of an apocalyptic death was particularly relevant at the turn of the 15th century as plague had visited the Italian peninsula at least once a decade since the Black Death pandemic of 1346–53. There was fear of death, and consequently, fear of sin.[5] This led to a need for building up spiritual merit, in indulgences and good works. Divine anger was often cited as the reason behind the frequent epidemics. Subsequently, apocalyptic annihilation through plague could theoretically be averted by turning to religion in something like Bianchi processions.

The link between plague and apocalypse, especially in terms of portents, was well established by the turn of the 15th century.[6] However, the connection to the apocalypse in sources about the Bianchi is mostly partial: promising the destruction of some, but not all, of humankind. This is particularly the case in the most common origin narrative for the movement, which foretells the death of only a third of humanity. Frugoni brought the Bianchi into modern scholarship in the 1960s, focusing on the eschatological motives for participants.[7] This chapter expands on Frugoni, bringing the three Bianchi origin stories into conversation with each other and with the other apocalyptic Bianchi texts.

While the turn of a century was cause enough for eschatological anxieties, 1399 was also a moment of political and religious crisis. The Papal Schism had begun in 1378 and was showing no sign of resolution.[8] Indeed, in the prelude to

4 Lee, *The Bianchi*, 25–29.

5 Arsenio Frugoni, "La devozione dei bianchi del 1399," in *L'attesa dell'età nuova nella spiritualità della fine del medioevo* (Todi: 1962), 232–48, at 238.

6 Laura A. Smoller, "Of Earthquakes, Hail, Frogs, and Geography: Plague and the Investigation of the Apocalypse in the Later Middle Ages," in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia: 2000), 156–88, esp. 167.

7 Frugoni, "La devozione," 240.

8 Joëlle Rollo-Koster and Thomas M. Izbicki, eds., *A Companion to the Great Western Schism 1378–1417* (Leiden: 2009), 89.

the Bianchi in his chronicle, the Lucchese Giovanni Sercambi notes how there was much unrest in the world: discord and wars in Italy, and most importantly "la scisma della Chieza" ["the schism in the Church"].[9] Smoller describes the Schism as an "apocalyptic-seeming disaster".[10] Blumenfeld-Kosinski reinforces this, noting that many contemporary voices used pestilential imagery to refer to the Schism, oscillating between viewing it as an internal or an external disease.[11] Contemporary chronicler Jean Froissart described it as a "great beginning of pestilence" and Christine de Pisan called it a "contagious plant that was thrust into the bosom of the Holy Church".[12] This was an important backdrop to the Bianchi processions.

Three origin narratives purportedly provided the motivation for the populace to participate in the Bianchi devotions. It is here that the apocalyptic threat of the destruction of (at least some of) humankind is communicated. The first, and most widely diffused narrative is the *tre pani* story, the story of the three loaves, found across multiple sources including *laude* and images. The second narrative, found in two sources, is the book story, and the third, Capperledis' tale, is recorded only once. The sources will be described further below. These stories will be examined in turn, setting out each tale and unpacking their apocalyptic elements. The circulation of these narratives is suggested by the various manuscript and visual witnesses to their contents, implying that those who participated in the Bianchi processions understood what was at stake.

The chronicler Sercambi adds a further two apocalyptic connections. Between his presentation of the origin narratives and his detailed eye-witness account of the Bianchi, he presents two Latin prophecies and a letter describing the coming of Antichrist. These are texts written by others, which is not unusual for Sercambi in his compilation of the history of Lucca.[13] While they draw focus away from the Bianchi, the inclusion of these materials within Sercambi's forty-chapter section on the movement bears investigating.

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9 Giovanni Sercambi, *Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi, Lucchese*, vol. 2, ed. Salvatore Bongi (Lucca: 1892), 291.

10 Smoller, "Of Earthquakes," 185.

11 Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "The Conceptualization and Imagery of the Great Schism," in *A Companion to the Great Western Schism*, 123–58, at 147.

12 Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (University Park, PA: 2006), 5.

13 Giovanni Sercambi wrote a detailed chronicle of Lucca from the 12th century until his death in 1423. He was pro Guinigi, the faction which successfully won a coup in Lucca in 1400. See e.g. Robert A. Pratt, "Giovanni Sercambi, Speziale," *Italica* 25, no. 1 (1948), 12–14.

Thus, this chapter will assess the importance of the apocalypse to the Bianchi devotions. It will begin with an assessment of the Bianchi origin narratives, focusing first on the *tre pani* narrative, then the book story, and finally Capperledis' tale. It will assess the eschatological elements in each narrative, and their impact on the movement. Then, other apocalyptic elements within the devotions will be assessed, specifically the prophecies and letter on Antichrist presented by Sercambi. This will demonstrate that despite the apocalyptic elements connected to the Bianchi, there was no clear, straightforward eschatological motivation for participants in the processions. While personal and communal salvation from a forthcoming plague epidemic was at stake, it seems unlikely that there was a fear of the imminent coming of a last judgement and apocalypse.

1 Origin Stories: the *Tre pani* Story

The most commonly recorded narrative connected to the origins of the Bianchi is the *tre pani* story. Briefly, a peasant working in the fields was approached by a man dressed as a pilgrim (Christ in disguise). The pilgrim asked for three pieces of bread, which the peasant miraculously found. The pilgrim asked for the bread to be moistened so he could eat it, and the peasant went off in search of water, where he encountered a women dressed in white (the Virgin, also in disguise). There was a to and fro between the heavenly figures as Christ wanted the bread moistened and the Virgin did not, and one piece of bread was thrown into the water. The Virgin then revealed her true identity and explained that the peasant had condemned a third of humanity to die through his actions. She presented the Bianchi devotions as a method through which humankind could redeem itself.

This narrative is told in the chronicles of Giovanni Sercambi of Lucca, Luca Dominici of Pistoia, and two chronicles from Città di Castello.[14] It is also narrated in several *laude* from other central Italian sources, in both the vernacular and Latin.[15] In Sercambi's manuscript, the prose and *lauda* versions

14 Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2:291–94; Lucca, Archivio di Stato (ASL), MS 107, fols. 299v–301v; Luca Dominici, *Cronache di ser Luca Dominici: Cronaca della venuta dei Bianchi e della moria 1399–1400*, ed. Carlo Gigliotti (Cav. Alberto Pacinotti, 1933), 5054; "Cronaca dei Laurenzi," in *Due cronache quattrocentesche*, ed. Angelo Ascani (Città di Castello: 1966), 57–99, at 91–94; Angelo Cerboni, "Cronaca Latina," in *Due cronache*, 1–56, at 15–17.

15 "Venne Gesu" in Bernard Toscani, *Le laude dei Bianchi contenute nel codice Vaticano Chigiano L. VII 266: edizione critica* (Florence: 1979), 69–81; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigiano L.VII.266, fols. 18r–19v and two versions of "Del Segno"

of the narrative are each accompanied by several images. There are also frescoes of this narrative in Lazio and Umbria.[16] This attests to the popularity of this narrative, combined with several recapitulations of the story later in the chronicles.[17]

Consequently, there is a promise of partial world annihilation as a result of the peasant's actions. As he has thrown a third of the bread into the water, a third of humankind must perish through plague. This provided sufficient motivation for the populace at the turn of the fifteenth century to join the devotions. The living memory of plague and the devastation it wrought were enough to provoke a strong reaction of the populace who heard this story, even if it was just a partial apocalypse. There is also a focus on communal salvation, as collective actions were required to save a third of the world. It is this joint action rather than a focus on an idea of "personal death" which was a key driving force behind the Bianchi.[18]

The three loaves of bread represented three different torments. The Tuscan sources simply present three separate pieces of bread, or a loaf of bread in three pieces. This is echoed in the visual sources, which show three, round, identical pieces of bread. The Umbrian texts offer more differentiation. The first piece of bread is wheaten (*grano*), the second of spelt (*spelta*), and the third of barley (*orzo*). Lignani suggests that each represents a different scourge to be inflicted on humankind.[19] This is reinforced in many of the *laude*, where the Virgin clarifies that the three threats are plague (*pistolentia*/*pestilentia*),

in Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2:294–300; ASL 107, fols. 300r–01v; Toscani, *Le laude dei Bianchi*, 106–11; Chigiano L.VII.266, fols. 24v–25v. "Acciò che tucti lo intendate" in Paolo Renzi and Anna Mori, *Le laude dei Bianchi di Perugia nel codex Vaticanus Latinus 4835* (Ancona: 2013), 70–71; BAV, MS Vat. lat. 4835, fols. 17v–21v. "Matre non ci abandonare" in Gennaro Maria Monti, *Un laudario umbro quattrocentista dei Bianchi* (Società Tipografica "Leonardo da Vinci," 1920), 113–17; Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 4061, fols. 71v–74v. "Misericordia pecchaturj" in Monti, *Un laudario*, 117–21; Casanatense 4061, fols. 74v–78r. Two versions of "Se peccatore te vol salvare" in Renzi and Mori, *Le laude dei Bianchi*, 94–97; Vat. lat. 4835, fols. 80r–85r; Monti, *Un laudario*, 124–27; Casanatense 4061, fols. 86v–89v; Renzi and Mori, *Le laude dei Bianchi*, 68–70; Vat. lat. 4835, fols. 14r–17r; Casanatense 4061, fols. 24r–26r.

16 These paintings can be found in the churches of San Paolo, Poggio Mirteto (Lazio), San Eusanio, Rieti (Umbria), and Santa Maria al Monumento, Terni (Umbria).

17 For example, Dominici refers to a *tavola quadra* depicting the so-called *miracolo di scozia* in his *Cronaca*, 161.

18 Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, "Introduction," in *Last Things*, 1–18, at 5.

19 Antonella Lignani, "Un esempio di letteratura popolare: i Bianchi a Città di Castello nel 1399," in *Sulle orme dei Bianchi: dalla Liguria all'Italia centrale: atti del convegno storico internazionale*, ed. Francesco Santucci (Assisi: 2001), 141–52, at 147.

hunger (*fame grande*/*fames magna*), and great death (*gran morte*/*dampna*).[20] The Latin offers some differentiation between plague and great death, in the sense of damage or injury, although it is not clear how this threat would physically be manifested. It is also not evident which piece of bread represented which threat, but a visceral image is created of the impact as one of the *laude* describes how the bread becomes "pien di sangue e 'nverminato" ["full of blood and worms"].[21] This underscores the impact on a third of the world, suggesting that they will become like the bread.

Ultimately, this narrative is clear in the threat of plague that is promised as a punishment for non-participation in the Bianchi processions. However, as only a third of humankind is destined to perish, it is not clear if individuals should participate on the off-chance that they are in this doomed third, or if there is a clearer designation in this division into three. The idea of a total world annihilation is not present. Moreover, there are very specific instructions on the actions to be completed in order to avert this apocalypse. While these are inevitably reported differently in different sources, this idea that there are tangible actions that could be performed in order to achieve salvation offered hope in the face of the very real threat of plague. This notwithstanding, it is evident that the threat even of a partial apocalypse was sufficient to move the populace to participate in these religious processions.

2 Book Story

The book story is recounted by Sercambi and Dominici, although these two narratives are much more distinctive than the continuity seen with the key points of the *tre pani* stories. Sercambi's telling has clear resonances with the *tre pani* story as the protagonist is a peasant working the fields.[22] An ox spoke to the peasant, asking him why he was hitting him.[23] The peasant hit the animal again, and it carried him away on his horns to a lonely place (*luogo solitario*). There, an angel appeared between the horns of the ox, and explained God's anger with humankind and that they must do penance and dress in white. As proof of his angelic encounter, the peasant was given a book in which

20 Vernacular examples from "Se peccatore" in Renzi and Mori, *Le laude*, 95. Latin examples from "Venit Christus," in Ibid., 68–70.

21 "Venne Gesu", in Toscani, *Le laude dei Bianchi*, 69–81, l. 147.

22 Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2: 302–03.

23 "Perchè mi percuoti?", Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2: 302.

was written what God wanted the pope and the populace to do.[24] The angel explained that no one would be able to open the book until it was placed on the altar of St. Peter in Rome, when an angel would open it. The peasant went to spread the message, passing it to his local bishop and other ranks of the clergy, and the Bianchi procession were reportedly begun.

Dominici, however, does not mention the peasant.[25] His narrative is focused on the book and its potential to heal the Great Schism. A man "oltre misura" ["beyond measure"] is described holding the book and participating in a Bianchi procession directed at Rome. Dominici notes that the book is to be opened on the altar of St. Peter and contains what life should be like after 1400.[26] The chronicler claims that new pope is among the Bianchi participants, and indicates that 1400 should be a year of great triumph for the pope, with Rome having pastors anew.

While neither of these versions makes explicit mention of the apocalypse, or indeed plague, there are resonances with the Great Schism. As mentioned above, the Schism was a crucial part of the context in which the Bianchi unfolded and had undeniable apocalyptic undertones. Dominici presents the year 1400 as a clean break for the church, to move away from the antipope and unsuitable current pope to renew the papacy. The opening of the book on the altar of St. Peter and its ineffable divine instructions forms a crucial part of this narrative. It is unclear whether this was realised, as there are no reports later in the chronicles of a person reaching Rome with a book and an angel opening it, or even elucidating the contents. This therefore seems to speak of a hope of, rather than a report of a resolution. Frugoni notes that this recalls the previous turn of the century with the Jubilee of Boniface VIII, and suggests that the new century offered hope for a resolution of the disorder in the Church.[27] The idea of the angelic pope is also significant as a prophesied figure, along with Antichrist as will be discussed below.[28] However, while such a strong feature in Dominici's book story narrative, there is little mention of the papacy throughout the rest of his account of the Bianchi, and no mention of the book once the movement reached Rome.

The unopenable book resonates with Revelation 5 where the scroll with seven seals is opened by one who is worthy. This connects with the Dominici's notion of finding the new pope, although this is the only link to the biblical

24 "quello che Dio vorrà fare del papa et dell' altro populo". Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2: 303.
25 Dominici, *Cronaca*, 56.
26 "che vita si de' tenere dal CCCC in là". Dominici, *Cronaca*, 56.
27 Frugoni, "La devozione," 242.
28 Bynum and Freedman, "Introduction," 3.

idea of apocalypse in this narrative, and it is not explicit. The Bianchi are merely presented as a necessity to appease divine anger; there is no explanation for what should happen if they were not to be completed. The pestilential motivation from the *tre pani* narrative is not mirrored.

Thus, the book narrative adds some extra, somewhat millenarian, elements to the origins of the Bianchi, drawing a clear link to the Great Schism and hopes for renewal around the turn of the fifteenth century. However, the motivation provided is not particularly strong, and for Dominici there is barely an origin narrative at all, merely a mention of the book. This is an important intertextual reference, and indeed the book does re-emerge several times in both Sercambi and Dominici's chronicles, suggesting its continued importance beyond these initial accounts.[29] Nevertheless, the specific connection to the Bianchi is somewhat weak beyond the placement by both chroniclers of the narrative in their respective "origin story" sections. While Sercambi mentions some instructions for Bianchi participants, the connection to the popular religious revival is not as clear as with the *tre pani* narrative. The book story therefore diversifies the origin narratives and adds some further eschatological resonances, but again does not suggest an impending apocalypse for humankind, rather the potential beginning of a new age.

3 Capperledis

The final narrative connected with the inception of the Bianchi is Capperledis' tale. This features solely in Dominici's chronicle and is recounted through the lens of a preacher.[30] Capperledis is described as a forty-year-old *eremita* [hermit] who had entered the monastery as a girl and had never broken her enclosure. One night, she was taken *invisible* [invisibly] from her cell by an angel to a large field of fragrant flowers. There, she returned to herself and saw a circle of infinite Bianchi, who were carrying candles, and singing the *Stabat Mater*. The angel explained that these were blessed spirits (*spiriti beati*) and that they were in eternal life. Capperledis asked if she was dead, and the angel replied that God desired her not to ask any further, but that she should look carefully at what she saw so she would be able to report on it. He took her to the middle of the field, and they encountered God the Father. Further along she saw a large, beautiful woman dressed in white kneeling in adoration: the Virgin Mary. She

29 Dominici, *Cronaca*, 118, 200; Sercambi *Croniche*, 2:356.

30 Dominici, *Cronaca*, 168–70.

and the other Bianchi were praying for sinners. Suddenly, "di là", came Christ on the cross, wearing the crown of thorns and bleeding from his wounds.

God said that Christ was once crucified to redeem humanity, but that now their sins had grown so great that either it was necessary to destroy (*disfare*) the world or crucify him again. He reminded the Virgin of the pain she had endured and asked if she wanted to pardon humanity again. He asked who crucified Christ and she responded the Jews. God said that the Jews had crucified him once, but that Christians were crucifying him a thousand times every day.[31] The Virgin asked God to remember Christ's request that God pardon those who crucified him as they did not know what they were doing. She promised that the sinners would dress in white, performing penance so that they could be forgiven. Christ bowed his head, he and God the Father disappeared, and the Virgin shouted *misericordia* nine times. The "Bianchi" responded, and then they too disappeared. The angel told Capperledis to go and tell all she had witnessed to the priest she would find in the church of S. Orso,[32] and to tell him to take the tale to the bishop, who was called Irico.[33] She was particularly to underscore that humankind should make peace, and then God would revoke the sentence. Capperledis was worried as she had never broken her enclosure, but the angel instructed her to go straight through the air and she would be guided. So, she did, and found the church and the priest, told her story, and then returned home. The priest almost took leave of his senses, but went to the bishop and then the Bianchi devotions began "nel modo che l'agnolo li disse" ["just as the angel said"].

This lengthy tale appears in a sermon by the Augustinian Grazia di Santo Spirito at Pacciana, near Pistoia on September 18. This was a significant period after the beginning of the processions, and indeed after the first itinerant Bianchi processions had left Pistoia. While this creates a level of distance, it also establishes a clear clerical transmission from Capperledis to the Irish priest and bishop to this Italian Augustinian. This affords a level of authenticity and authority to the tale, as well as demonstrating the use of preaching as a method of spreading Bianchi origin stories.

This narrative has the most connections to the apocalypse. The horde dressed in white connects to the horde from Revelation. Dominici uses the term "Bianchi" for the horde and for those processing in 1399. However, the kneeling Bianchi in Capperledis' vision are also described as *spiriti beati*,

31 "I cristiani il crocifiggono ogni dì mille volte," Ibid., 169.

32 Perhaps a reference to Ursus of Aosta, an Italian evangelist believed to be of Irish origin.

33 There are no obvious candidates for this Irico in Jacobus Waræus, *De Præsulibus Hiberniæ* (London: 1665). The closest possible match is a Rodericus, who was bishop of Kilmore (80), but this is somewhat of a stretch.

suggesting that these are not the same as the earthly Bianchi participants. Another key element is Christ bleeding on the cross. Gragnolati suggests that the wounded body of Christ, in addition to inspiring "love and pity" also underscored Christ's "flesh and suffering", in addition to the suffering of the Virgin.[34] This creates a more extreme motivation for participants as the two options presented are the destruction of humankind or the re-crucifixion of Christ. To the medieval Christian mindset, this latter would have been completely unacceptable, and thus the Bianchi processions are imperative to persuade God to revoke the sentence. Indeed, the presence of God the Father and his wrath reinforce the threat, levelling it up from the previous narratives where it was merely Christ and the Virgin or an angel. The suffering of Christ also resonates throughout the Bianchi processions in the form of *Imitatio Christi*. The connection to the crucifixion is realised in the numerous Passion *laude* associated with the movement as well as the self-flagellation carried out by some Bianchi participants.[35] This was not a requirement of all joining the processions, and remained an individual choice, but this demonstrates the penitential nature of the processions and the perceived need for atonement.

The location of the vision in the afterlife is also significant, tapping into other otherworldly journeys. The most obvious link here is Dante and his journey through the realms of the afterlife, in particular the garden described in Purgatory XXVIII and the "prato di fresca verdura" ["meadow of fresh green"] in Limbo.[36] Dream visions of heaven, hell, and purgatory were not simply an Italian concern. The French writer Helinand of Froidmont (*c*.1150–*c*.1237) reported a miracle of a man who died and had a similar vision of a "flower-filled field"[37] and other visionaries who were guided by the Virgin. These surroundings resonate with Capperledis' tale, as does the role of the Virgin. Taking the Irish context of Capperledis into account, a thirteenth-century account by an English Cistercian places Purgatory in Ireland, where travel to the other world was reportedly possible by way of St. Patrick's Purgatory.[38] The idea that Capperledis goes "invisibilmente" is also instructive. This suggests that she

34 Manuele Gragolati, "From Decay to Splendor: Body and Pain in Bonvesin da la Riva's Book of the Three Scriptures," in *Last Things*, 83–98, at 92–93, 96.

35 The *Stabat Mater* is a key example, but there are various other *laude* which detail the crucifixion, with those in Sercambi's manuscript accompanied by dynamic illustrations of the crucifixion with Christ's blood adorning the parchment. Lee, *The Bianchi*, 134–44.

36 *Inferno* IV.111. All *Commedia* citations are from Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, 3 vols. (Oxford, UK: 1996–2010).

37 Harvey Stahl, "Heaven in View: The Place of the Elect in an Illuminated Book of Hours," in *Last Things*, 205–32, at 219.

38 The *Tractatus de Purgatorio Santi Patricii*. Carol G. Zaleski, "St. Patrick's Purgatory: Pilgrimage Motifs in a Medieval Otherworld Vision," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46, no. 4 (1985): 467–85, at 470, 472.

did not go bodily to the afterlife, as further prompted by her questioning her status in regard to life and death.[39] The narrative also states that Capperledis saw other things in addition to the narrative she reported, but that it was not possible to reveal everything. This kind of secret knowledge is reminiscent of Dante's inability to describe the entirety of his vision.[40] Capperledis' journey to the afterlife must be understood in the context of this rich history of otherworldly accounts, imbuing the hermit with the authority to speak on what she saw in the "al-di-là".

Thus, Capperledis' tale provides the strongest connection to the afterlife, and by association, the apocalypse. This is not just in the complete world annihilation promised in the narrative, but also in the imagery woven throughout. Notwithstanding, this is the least well diffused Bianchi origin narrative. Rather than featuring at the start of Dominici's chronicle with the other two origin stories, Capperledis' tale is told by a preacher much later on. It is therefore unclear how the Bianchi participants may have engaged with this narrative. This tale presents the most potent threat against humankind, underscoring the necessity of participating in the Bianchi devotions not only to prevent the apocalypse, but also to ensure that Christ does not need to be crucified again.

The three Bianchi origin narratives do not provide a coherent idea of how the apocalypse was to be engaged with by participants in the movement. The inclusion of narratives like this within a chronicle is not surprising, given the magpie-like tendency particularly of Sercambi and Dominici to include all sorts of information from external sources. While the message in Capperledis' tale is very clear in terms of total annihilation, this narrative did not enjoy the wide diffusion of the *tre pani* story, suggesting a stronger engagement with the tale that foretold the destruction of only a third of humankind. The book story also connects more to the Schism than the apocalypse per se, but underscores the hopes of renewal in the church at the turn of the fifteenth century. The wrath of Christ or God highlighted in these narratives has resonances with the flagellant movement at the time of the Black Death, particularly a heavenly letter calling for reform to assuage Christ's anger.[41] However, as Lerner argues, this letter was not unique to the flagellants, thus this idea of renewal was not reserved solely for purportedly divinely inspired popular religious revivals.

39 For more on the separation between body and soul and physicality in the afterlife, see Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture* (South Bend, IN: 2005).

40 Paradiso XXIII.58–66.

41 Robert E. Lerner, "The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities," *The American Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (1981): 533–52, at 537.

The connection with plague here is key too, as both these flagellants and the Bianchi aimed to appease a wrathful God in order to ward of an epidemic. The presence of the plague heightened the threat promised in the narratives, even if it did not actually necessarily coincide with the Bianchi devotions. It was the apocalyptic threat of disease, whether all-encompassing or partial, which appears have been the major driving force behind joining the Bianchi processions.

4 Two Prophecies and an Antichrist

After the origin narratives for the Bianchi, Sercambi presents two Latin prophecies and a vernacular letter which mentions Antichrist. These are followed by the chronicler's description of Bianchi processions at Lucca.[42] Such a diversion is not unusual in Sercambi's chronicle, although the connection between these two chapters and the Bianchi is not clearly elucidated. This section first explores the prophecies, then Antichrist, unpacking the contents and attempting to contextualise them within the remit of the Bianchi devotions.

4.1 *Luna auferetur*

The first prophecy appears to discuss the papal issues at the turn of the fifteenth century. There was a long tradition of prophecies in this period, such as the Cedar of Lebanon prophecy,[43] and specifically for the popes, connected to Joachim of Fiore.[44] These *Vaticinia de Summis Pontificibus* were a combination of text and image connected to various popes, beginning with Nicholas III (1277–1280).[45] The last of the prophecies reports a terrible beast, a possible reference to Antichrist, and there is some debate as to whether they were composed before or after the start of the Schism.[46] Grundman suggests that the prophecies were written by the Fraticelli, who hoped for an angelic pope, but instead prophesied an Antichrist.[47] Millet also sets out numerous

42 Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2:344–47.

43 Robert E. Lerner, *The Powers of Prophecy: The Cedar of Lebanon Vision from the Mongol Onslaught to the Dawn of the Enlightenment* (Oakland, CA: 1983).

44 Herbert Grundman, "Die Papstprophetien des Mittelalters," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 19 (1929): 77–138. For an illustrated manuscript version, see e.g., Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 404, fols. 88r–95r.

45 Grundman, "Die Papstprophetien," 79.

46 Grundman, "Die Papstprophetien", 116.

47 For more on prophecy and the Fraticelli, see Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: 1969), 216–19.

papal prophecies related to the Schism collected by cardinal Martin de Zalba (1337–1403), which also comprise a version of this example from Sercambi.[48] This prophecy in Sercambi's manuscript therefore fits into a long tradition of papal prophecy.

The prophecy is preceded by a table, which lays out its key actors:

Agnus	Yoseph		Pax	Luna		
Charity	Humilitas	Daniel	Sponsus	Uxor		Amen.
			Lapis angularis			

Deo gratia. Laus sit Altissimo.[49]
Then follows the prophecy itself:[50]

> The Moon will be removed since the sun will rise and its splendour will be as [the light] of seven days. Let us rejoice and be exultant, as the marriage of the Lamb is coming, and his wife has prepared. Joseph, having been sold into the land of Egypt, called his brothers (who were oppressed by famine), before whom he placed a great banquet, and after the Egyptians had been made to leave, he revealed himself to be in the heart of charity. The natural branches are cut off and through their unbelief join themselves to the olives, after the sterile branches of the wild olive tree have been cut off. Daniel will rest with his brothers. They will look upon him whom they have pierced.[51]

Tognetti suggests that this prophecy was composed around the turn of the fifteenth century, but not specifically for the Bianchi.[52] The version collected

48 Hélène Millet, "Le cardinal Martin de Zalba (†1403) face aux prophéties du Grand Schisme d'Occident," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 98, no. 1 (1986): 265–93, at 277–78.

49

Lamb	Joseph		Peace	Moon		
Charity	Lowliness	Daniel	Groom	Wife		Amen.
			Cornerstone			

50 This translation is based on both sources for the prophecy.

51 Sercambi's version reads: Luna auferetur quando sol aurietur et splendor eius, quia septem dierum gaudeamus, quia venerunt nuptie agni, et uxor eius prezentavit se. Yosep venditus in terra Egipti vocat fratres suos fame opressos, quibus preferens convivium magnum expulsus Egiptiis relevat se in visceribus charitatis. Naturales rami exazi propter incredulitatem viserunt se olive, precisis ramis sterilibris oleastri. Daniel requiescet cum fratribus suis. Aspicient in eum quem transfixerunt.

52 Giampaolo Tognetti, "Sul moto dei Bianchi nel 1399," *Bullettino dell'Instituto Storico Italiano* 78 (1967): 205–343, at 237.

by de Zalba is slightly different, although the broad strokes in the section in common with Sercambi remain the same.[53]

The text continues in the Vatican manuscript, suggesting how the prophecy ought to have been illustrated. While there is a small figure of a sun with a face under the line "sol oriens", the verso of the folio remains blank. There is also a manuscript in Prague which includes a similar prophecy but with slightly different wording, beginning "deicietur luna, ut ingrediatur sol".[54] I concur with Tognetti, Millet, and also Roberto Rusconi that the link to the Bianchi is tenuous, and is only afforded due to the location of the prophecy within Sercambi's chronicle.[55] Nonetheless, it is worth unpacking the key themes.

Millet describes the prophecy as "énigmatique,"[56] and indeed a straightforward interpretation is not possible. Considering first part of the text, the "Luna" is most likely the Avignonese Antipope Benedict XIII (1394–1423) whose natal name was Pedro de Luna.[57] In this French environment, this potentially placed the sun king in opposition to the moon pope.[58] The sun and moon allegory had been used by Innocent III (1161–1216) with the papacy as the sun, with the fullness of power, and the moon representing the subsidiary, temporal powers of the secular kings and emperors.[59] Here, the positions have shifted as the pope is now the moon, although his natal name goes some way to explaining

53 Millet, "Le cardinal," 277–78. Vatican City, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Armarium LIV, t. 25, f. 16. Post figura terribillem in folio sequenti erat scriptura sequens ad suis figuris infer*us* po*ten*tis. Luna auferet*ur* q*uni*am sol oriet*ur* et splendor ei*us* erit, quasi septem dier*um* gaudeamus et exultemus, q*uia* venerunt nuptie agni, et uxor eius p*re*paravit se. Joseph venditus in terra egipti vocat fr*at*res suos fame op*re*ssos, quibus p*re*ferens convivi*um* magnu*m* expulsis egiptiis revelat se in visceribus caritatis. Naturales rami excisi p*rop*ter incredulitate*m* viserunt se olive, precisis ramis sterilibus oleastri. Daniel requiescet cu*m* fr*atr*ibus suis. Aspiciens in cu*m* que*m* tra*ns*fixerun*t*. Sol oriens et q*ui* in si*mil*i loco plane folii era*n*t depicte figure videl*icet figura papa*e p*er* se et figura Joseph quasi sedente in medio duor*um* et danielis sedentis in medio duor*um* et figura *Christi* q*ui* stans [et figura m*u*lier*um* q*ui* fr*atris*] qua*m* ipse *Christ*us videba*n*t p*er* manu*m* accip*er*e et super figura*m* capitis *Christi* erat script*um* sponsii *Christi*s et sup*er* capud mulieris erat script*us* uxor ec*clesi*a. Ite*m* erat ibi at p*re*te una*m* figura q*ui* dimidie lune sup*er* qua*m* era script*us* luna auferet*ur*.

54 Grundman, "Die Papstprophetien", 127; Prague, National Library, MS VIII. D. 10. (Y. III. 2. n. 44.), fol. 26v. I have unfortunately not been able to consult this manuscript.

55 Roberto Rusconi, *L'Attesa della fine: Crisi della società, profezia ed Apocalisse in Italia al tempo del grande scisma d'Occidente, 1378–1417* (Rome: 1979), 204–18.

56 Millet, "Le cardinal," 279.

57 Tognetti, "Sul moto," 237. Indeed, this pope was known as "le pape de la lune".

58 Jean-Patrice Boudet, "Le roi-soleil dans la France médiévale," *Micrologus* (2004): 1–24, at 9.

59 "Porro sicut luna lumen suum a sole sortitur, quæ re vera minor est illo quantitate simul et qualitate, situ pariter et effectu: sic regalis potestas ab auctoritate pontificali suæ sortitur

this change. The prophecy suggests that the moon must be removed, possibly speaking to the end of Luna's tenancy as antipope. The replacement by the sun is less clear – this could either speak to the ascendancy of the French kings, or simply to the arrival of a new pope. There is no biblical precedent for this kind of interaction between moon and sun.[60] This section could connect to Dominici's book story, where the Schism is predicted to come to an end, although the link is somewhat tenuous.

The rest of the prophecy has much clearer biblical references, even if their implications are less evident. The next section on the marriage of the Lamb recalls Rev 19:6–9, where the bride makes herself ready and dresses in "byssino splendenti et candido" ["white, fine linen"]. This provides a stronger connection to the Bianchi, although the white clothes are not mentioned in the prophecy itself. As Emmerson points out, the Lamb in this vision was a symbol of Salvation, thus this is an image full of hope.[61] This potentially aligns with the previous statement: if the Antipope is to be deposed, a time of renewal will follow.

The next sentences reference the story of Joseph (Gn 37–50), expressing his generosity towards his brothers despite their poor treatment of him. Here the connection to the Bianchi and the contemporary political situation becomes obscure. It could be that Joseph espoused the qualities required of the new pope or the Bride of the Lamb, but it is impossible to go beyond speculation due to the concise nature of these references.

The olive metaphor recalls Romans 11:11–24. Here, Paul explains how if the root is holy, then so too are the branches. He states that if some branches are broken off, and if they are grafted among the others though a wild olive shoot, they all share the same nourishing sap and should not consider themselves superior. The branches were broken off due to unbelief. This seems somewhat more straightforward than the phrasing from the prophecy, although the general gist seems to be the same, with the natural branches being connected to the wild olive tree. Ultimately the message here seems to be that in order to remain attached to the tree, one must maintain faith. The broken branches

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dignitatisu splendorum." Letter from Innocent III to the prefect of Acerbus and the nobles of Tuscany cited in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. Migne (Paris: 1844), 214, col. 377.

60 The moon and sun are described as temporal symbols (e.g., Num 10:10 and 1 Sam 20:24), objects or actors of worship (e.g., Gn 37:9, Deut 17:3), and are darkened (e.g., Matt 24:29, Joel 2:31), but never in the correlation described in the prophecy.

61 Richard K. Emmerson, "The Apocalypse in Medieval Culture," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGuinn (London: 1992), 293–332, at 325.

here could perhaps be representative of those following the Schismatic popes, or not joining the Bianchi movement.

The penultimate line focuses on Daniel. According to Grundman, the Daniel Apocalypse (Dan 10–12) is the prototype of medieval apocalyptic visions.[62] These chapters detail a vision received by Daniel of a time yet to come (*novissimis diebus*).[63] Information was revealed to him about waves of warfare between different states, underscoring the violence. There is a clear idea of apocalypse, with people either awakening to everlasting life or shame. Daniel is also connected to the idea of peace, which was a strong component of the Bianchi devotions, although again this is far from explicit within the prophecy. The final line recalls the prophecy of Malachi from Zach 12:10 "aspicient ad me quem confixerunt"; the final biblical word is replaced with "transfixerunt", although both mean pierced. This biblical prophecy foretells the destruction of Jerusalem's enemies. It is not quite clear how these final biblical allusions in this prophecy enmesh with the first lines about the moon, or indeed how these are connected to the events of 1399.

Ultimately while the first couple of lines seem promising in terms of a connection to the Bianchi and more particularly the papal Schism, these links remain tacit and require a certain degree of interpretation. Indeed, more interpretation is required as the prophecy continues, as there is no clear explanation for the text, let alone a clear connection to the turn of the fifteenth century. Consequently, while its inclusion speaks to Sercambi's general collection of letters and other paraphernalia, its place within the Bianchi section of his chronicle seems perhaps coincidental.

4.2 *Coronatus longa corona*

Then follows the second prophecy, which appears much more straightforward.[64] On the other hand, I have been unable to find other recensions of this example. Nevertheless, the clearer language offers a more perspicuous explanation of the events it describes:

> Crowned with a long crown, safeguarded by an angelic voice, he will renounce the highest dignity; from this resignation, a new and astonishing election will follow thus:

62 Grundman, "Die Papstprophetien", 83.

63 Dan 10.14.

64 Tognetti, "Sul moto," 238.

> The electors and, at the same time, all those who will hear the voice of God by day and by night, to whom the angelic voice will command with a fearful voice the most worthy to be crowned. But he will be most worthy of the long plain of Italy, from the country of the wise, a humble man of a mature age, not remembered by many, of a good life and faith, neither proud nor vainglorious, but of good conduct and nature, sanguine and strong, of a common stature, not visible to the world, very serene, but full of fervour in wholehearted devotion to the saints, founder of the new company of those who endure the passion. Truly this perfect man, elected by God, already endowed as required, will not be a preacher or even consecrate the body of Christ, and before the day of his consecration, he will do many great things in his time. Many countries and their progeny will be exalted by the same man. His name will be Sextus, and in spite of his father, since he is in the beginning and his mother is further towards the end, and his life will be necessary for the salvation of the world. For a long time, he will remain wanted in the papal office; he who resigned his dignity by the command of an angel, staying with him always, will finish his days as a cardinal. And these will come about before long … for the jubilee of change is coming.[65]

This prophecy appears to predict the election of a new pope, guided by an angelic hand, ushering in a new age for the church to mitigate the schismatic crisis. The predecessor is required to step down and remain a cardinal to make way for the new pontiff. Tognetti suggests the "inventor" could be a promotor

65 Many parts of the Latin are too corrupt to translate, so I have aimed to convey the key sense of the prophecy. Coronatus longa corona, angelica vocie premunitus, renuntiabit dignitatem altissimam; ex qua quidem renuntiatione, nova et amirabilis subsequetur electio, isto modo videlicet: Electores simul et quilibet per se audient diurno et nocturno tempore vocem Dei, quibus vox angelica precipiet cum terrore dignissimum coronari. Hic vero dignissimus erit de Planitie Longha ytalicus, de patria sapientum, homo humiles, in etate matura, non recordatus a multis, bone vite et fidei, non superbus, non vanagloriosus, sed bone conversationis et morum, sanguineus et fortis, in statura comuni, non apparens mundo, serenissimus sed excitus in omni devotione santorum, invertor* novi comsortii sustinentium passionem. Iste vero homo perfectus, electus a Deo, sufficientia precedente, non erit predicator nec etiam comsecravit corpus Christi. Ante diem sue consecrationis faciet que multa bona in tempore suo. Multis patria & sanguis eius exaltabitur ab eodem. Nomen eius erit Sextus, invisam patris vero, quia in principio & matris longius circha finem, et vita eius erit mundo necessaria pro salute. Longho tempore permanebit desiderabilis im papatu; ille vero qui angelicho preceptu renuntiaverit dignitatem, semper cum co remanens cardinalis perficiet dies suos. Et hec erunt breviter sicut dictum est multum … quidem inmutatorius veniat iubileus. *likely inventor.

of the Bianchi, arguing that this would consequently be a significant testament to the spiritual resonance that the devotions could have.[66] This seems a stretch however; while the pope did ultimately support the Bianchi when the processions reached Rome, there was no indication of papal renewal.[67]

The reference to a Sextus is somewhat perplexing, although Tognetti and Frugoni convincingly argue for this being a reference to the ordinal rather than the name Sixtus. They postulate that this suggests a successor to the exemplary Celestine V: a Celestine VI.[68] This is further reinforced by the fact that the tiara would once again pass from a Boniface to a Celestine, as it had in 1294. Indeed, many considered the abdication of Celestine V to have opened a great spiritual crisis in the church, which Frugoni suggests might therefore be closed with this new abdication.[69] This means that the prophecy could speak to the end of the Schism.

The final line of the prophecy, while mutilated by a lacuna, suggests that the end of a century is imminent with the advent of a Jubilee. The Jubilee of 1400 is somewhat problematic as the papal bull has been lost. After the first Jubilee in 1300, Jubilees were to be once a century, which was altered in 1343 to every 50 years.[70] Another change was made in 1389, making the Jubilees every 33 years, with the next Holy Year in 1390. This meant that 1400 as a Jubilee year was in doubt, not least because of the Schism, as the Avignonese church had not celebrated the 1390 Jubilee.[71] Notwithstanding, hordes of people descended on Rome in that year, and Jubilee actions such as showing relics were performed.

Thus, this prophecy seems more connected to the Schism than the apocalypse. The fact that it appears to suggest a resolution indicates an end to the period of uncertainty however, and the underlying themes of apocalypse within the Schism identified in the introduction. This could also indicate a more millenarian interpretation of the prophecies in the Joachimite sense, hoping for a new age of man to overturn the corrupt papacy. The Jubilee reference could connect to the Bianchi temporally, as it suggests that a turn of a century was imminent, although due to the constantly changing parameters for Jubilee years this was not necessarily the case. Ultimately, while this prophecy

66 Tognetti, "Sul moto," 238.

67 Sercambi, *Croniche*, 2: 370–71.

68 Tognetti, "Sul moto," 238; Frugoni, "La devozione," 243.

69 Frugoni, "La devozione," 243.

70 Gary Dickson, "The Crowd at the Feet of Pope Boniface VIII: Pilgrimage, Crusade and the First Roman Jubilee (1300)," *Journal of Medieval History* 25 (1999): 279–307, at 279.

71 Francesco di Marco Datini expresses some doubt as to whether there would be a Jubilee in 1400. Federigo Melis, "Movimento di popoli e motivi ecomonici nel giubileo del 1400," in *Miscellanea Gilles Gérard Meersseman* (Padua: 1970), 343–67, at 343.

seems more straightforward to interpret, its connection to the Bianchi is limited, while the connection to the end of a schism and end of the spiritual crisis in the church is the main focus.

5 Antichrist

Sercambi's final insertion is a narrative about Antichrist. Antichrist was a key figure in medieval apocalyptic thinking. He was the conclusion to the sixth age,[72] and was prophesied in a variety of different texts. There were various descriptions,[73] with a few key recurring elements, such as being born of a Jewish woman (specifically of the line of Dan) and having a supernatural origin, as well as a connection with Babylon due to its "numerous apocalyptic condemnations".[74] Emmerson argues that there was an identification between Antichrist and a "specific pope or political figure" from the thirteenth century, as seen above in the *Vaticini* prophecies.[75] After his birth, Antichrist would act almost like Christ, amassing followers and performing miracles, before his destruction.[76] People in the Middle Ages connected Antichrist to the idea of End Times, as he would "manifest himself during a most profound crisis".[77] As discussed above, the Schism was often described in these terms. Lerner states that the reign of Antichrist was one of "certain culminating events" which would herald the end of the world.[78] This certainly meant natural disasters, but also that after the reign of Antichrist, there would be a period of revival for the saints: a "golden age".[79] There were several reported Antichrists by this time, for example by Joachim of Fiore.[80] Consequently, a narrative on Antichrist in this context is not entirely out of place.

72 Apocalypse 6:1–8:5.

73 Including visual depictions, see e.g., Rosemary Muir Wright, *Art and Antichrist in Medieval Europe* (Manchester: 1995).

74 *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature*, ed. by Richard Kenneth Emmerson (Manchester: 1981), 20, 80.

75 *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 7.

76 E.g., Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: 1998), 87.

77 Michael A. Ryan, "Antichrist in the Middle Ages: *Plus ça change* …," *History Compass* 7, no. 6 (2009): 1581–92, at 1582.

78 Lerner, "The Black Death", 534.

79 Lerner, "The Black Death", 540, 548; Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 204.

80 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 7, 41. See also Lerner, "The Black Death", 548.

The letter Sercambi includes tells of the masters of San Giovanni di Rodi,[81] who had received word from their explorers, that on 15 January 1375, in Goralassi, in the province of Arcolesso, Babylonia, a woman named Chantas gave birth to the Antichrist.[82] The woman is described as "vilissima", and the father of the child cannot be found. Moreover, she is described as being of the line of Danocos, fitting with the elements origins traditionally associated with Antichrist. The explorers reportedly saw the boy, stating that at the age of two months, he spoke as if he was at a "perfecta etade" ["perfect age"]. The explorers explain that at the moment of the boy's birth, the heavenly spheres moved, casting the surrounding area into darkness for four months and the largest mountain in Babylon was cleaved in two. In the middle of the mountain was found a red and white column, carved with Latin letters reading "the hour of my birth has come, at the division of the world", which the explorers saw first-hand. The boy performed various miracles, resurrecting the dead and healing the sick, amassing adorers and believers, as per the traditional tales. The boy also interpreted scriptures and proclaimed prophecies, which no one could understand. A venerable Franciscan Master from Viterbo had such faith in the boy that he preached about him, convincing the congregation that he was the son of God.

The explorers reference Antichrist prophecies, stating that they believe them to be fulfilled by this boy. Proof was a key concern however, as they advised knights to be sent to Babylon to verify their claims, and they are clear about what events they personally witnessed. They underscore how the knights who came also believed, and that consequently the news should be spread in Italy so that people be wary of bad behaviour, and that they "believe truly to be near the end of the world". This suggests that in 1399, the world was living in the era of Antichrist as a key element is missing from this narrative: Antichrist's destruction.

The connection therefore to the Bianchi and to the turn of the fifteenth century is not clear: these are events from twenty-five years previously. The idea of a natural disaster such as plague in the context of Antichrist would not be incongruous, particularly as reminder to good Christians to mend their behaviour, as the knights suggest. None of the elements of their narrative are particularly surprising in terms of Antichrist literature, although it is notable that the mountain that split in two revealed writing in Latin rather than any local languages. As the lingua franca of the church, this could be seen as a

81 I.e., of the Order of Malta.

82 As I have discussed elsewhere, the location of the origin narratives is disparate.

message to the Christian faithful, and consequently reinforce the true nature of this Antichrist.

If we are to take this letter as true, this suggests that Sercambi places the Bianchi devotions in the time of Antichrist, with his destruction impending. This complicates things somewhat in terms of their eschatology, although the plague can be interpreted as a sign of the end times. However, the fact that Vincent Ferrer used the coming of Antichrist as a threat after the turn of the century suggests that there was not widespread belief that this was the true Antichrist.[83] Indeed, beyond Sercambi, there is little else to suggest that this tale of Antichrist born in 1375 was in wider circulation.[84] It is consequently unclear what the impact of this letter is supposed to be. Perhaps Sercambi includes this letter here as it came across his desk at the same time as the prophecies, or perhaps he is tacitly linking the three interventions, suggesting a connection to the end times through the papal prophecies and appearance of Antichrist. However, the lack of commentary proposed by the chronicler means that it is impossible to definitively state why these three elements are included and grouped together in his account of the Bianchi. Nevertheless, they add to the eschatological elements suggested in the origin narratives Sercambi includes: the pestilential threat from the *tre pani* narrative, and particularly the hope of papal renewal in his recension of the book story.

6 Consequences

If these apocalyptic references within the Bianchi movement have seemed disparate and disconnected, it is because they are. There was no single clear interpretation or application of the idea of end times with this popular religious revival. Particularly in the chronicle of Sercambi, it seems that various parts of an apocalyptic puzzle are being assembled, but that they have not been convincingly pieced together. The two origin narratives that he presents combine with the two papal prophecies and letter about Antichrist. However, we must remember that this is the only chronicle connected to the Bianchi to have such a number of potentially apocalyptic references. While Dominici's chronicle also includes the more eschatologically focused tale of Capperledis as an additional origin story, the lack of discussion of the end times in either

83 Frugoni, "La devozione," 244.

84 A tangential link is the creation of the Catalan Atlas in 1375, although this extraordinary document shows an adult Antichrist. BNF, MS Espagnol 30 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55002481n>.

chronicler's eye witness account of the Bianchi devotions suggests this was not a central concern for participants beyond the obvious threat of plague.

The origin narratives for the Bianchi do not create a coherent account of how it was believed the devotions started. However, the *tre pani* story has the clearest narrative structure throughout the sources, and appears throughout prose, *lauda*, and visual sources indicating it was the most circulated narrative. This privileges the foretelling of a third of humankind perishing, underscoring the threat of the impending disaster, but also not quite suggesting a total, apocalyptic annihilation of the world. The book story creates a clear link with the end of the papal schism, but requires much reading between the lines, especially in Sercambi's recension. While Capperledis' tale does point to a more apocalyptic endpoint, especially with the references to Revelation, its appearance later in Dominici's chronicle through the mouthpiece of a preacher suggests that this is his inclusion of a relevant narrative, much like Sercambi does with the letters, rather than placing it together with his account of the origins of the Bianchi at the start of his chronicle specifically dedicated to the devotions.

The Bianchi devotions fizzled out towards the beginning of 1400, while travel to Rome for the Jubilee absorbed any continuing fervour. There was no apocalypse. However, there were a significant number of deaths from plague, with the height of the disease in Tuscany in May 1400. According to the figures reported at the back of Dominici's chronicle by his brother Paolo, the population of Pistoia was roughly halved.[85] This is more than the third threatened in the *tre pani* narrative, although no chronicler makes any comment on the connection between the plague deaths and the Bianchi devotions. In locations like Pistoia then, this partial apocalypse did perhaps come to pass, but by the time the plague deaths occurred, they were not conceived of within the Bianchi framework by those discussing them. The connection with plague is clear in the Bianchi origin narratives, and yet the chronicles do not mention them when they come to treat the epidemic. The fact that the epidemic reached its height in 1400 could be partly to blame, but it seems that any apocalyptic notions remained firmly with the Bianchi, and were not expressed the following year.

As for the prophecies and letter on Antichrist, their connection to the Bianchi is even less clear. Indeed, the prophecies focus on a potentially millenarian renewal, and do not specifically attest to the necessity for apocalypse for this to occur. The Antichrist letter is also anomalous in that it is not picked up in other sources, and seems to be unconnected to the Bianchi. Consequently,

85 Dominici, *Cronaca*, 238–85. The deaths are reported by parish.

it appears that for the most part, the Bianchi can at most be connected to a partial apocalypse; anything more apocalyptic is only tangentially connected to the movement. This is explicit in the most widely diffused origin narrative; while Capperledis' tale is more eschatological, it appears not to have been in particularly wide circulation, and is not presented with other origin narratives. There is a clear focus between the sources on papal renewal with the book narrative from Sercambi and Dominici, as well as the papal prophecies. However, these all require multiple levels of complex interpretation in order to reveal the specifics of the renewal. This kind of thinking does not go hand in hand with a popular religious revival, where ideas to be communicated are usually more straightforward and easily graspable as seen particularly with the *laude*. This notwithstanding, even a partial threat of apocalypse was sufficient to move the populace of northern and central Italy to don white clothing and join penitential processions in the hope of allaying an epidemic of plague.

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CHAPTER 4

The Feminine Divine: Millenarian Interpretation by the Guglielmites

Sally M. Brasher

On August 24, 1281, the holy woman Guglielma died and was buried in a small parish church within the walls of the medieval Italian city of Milan. Although she was originally destined to be buried with honors in the nearby Cistercian monastery of Chiaravalle, at the time of her death Milan was at war with the city of Lodi and this political disruption made safe passage of the body out of the city impossible. Two months later a break in the war allowed for followers of the holy woman to transfer her relics to the monastery. A procession of followers including members of many of Milan's most illustrious families wound its way solemnly through the city following her coffin. At the monastery, Guglielma's body was washed in wine and water, and she was re-clothed and re-buried in an elaborately decorated coffin in a ceremony before the devoted following. A red butterfly appeared above the coffin and one follower, Sibilla di Malconzata, captured the insect and saved it as a relic. The coffin was placed in a position of honor in the monastery and an altar constructed above it, decorated by a fresco of Guglielma being presented to the Virgin Mary by Bernard of Clairvaux. The Cistercian monks, believing Guglielma to be a prospective saint, venerated her relics, gave sermons in her honor, and kept candles burning on the altar. Her many followers from Milan as well as pilgrims from farther afield frequented the shrine and laid their own private devotions.[1]

1 Barbara Newman is the leading scholar on Guglielma and her followers. I am deeply indebted to her work and this essay owes much to the exhaustive groundwork she has laid for the study of this group. See Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: 1995); "The Heretic Saint: Guglielma of Bohemia, Milan, and Brunate" in *Church History* 74/1 (2005), 1–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4146311; and "Agnes of Prague and Guglielma of Milan," in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition, c.100–1500*, eds. Alastair Minis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: 2010), 557–576. Other important scholarship on the group which informed this essay includes, Nancy Mandeville Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity?" *California Italian Studies* 6/1 (2016); Janine Larmon Peterson, "Social Roles, Gender Inversion, and the Heretical Sect: The Case of the Guglielmites," *Viator* v. 35 (2004), 203–220; and Stephen E. Wessley, "The Thirteenth Century Guglielmites: Salvation through Women," in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: 1987), 289–30.

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Guglielma's renown steadily increased after her death and although her followers attempted some level of subterfuge and secrecy in their devotions, they simultaneously constructed a novel theology around the holy woman which ultimately brought them to the attention of the Inquisition. Guglielma's followers came to believe she was the Holy Spirit incarnate who would soon be resurrected and who had chosen the Humiliati sister Maifreda of Pirovano as her vicar on earth, *la papessa* (popess), and once Guglielma returned, together they would usher her faithful followers through the final days of man, that age of the Holy Spirit before the final judgement. She had chosen follower Andreas Saramita as her "only begotten son" to witness and record her life. On Easter Sunday in 1300 followers gathered in secret to attend an elaborate Easter mass led by Maifreda. An unauthorized mass before a large crowd and delivered by a woman was the height of heresy, and this forced the hand of the inquisitors who subsequently initiated a lengthy trial of the leaders and followers of the group.[2]

This millennialist group, known as the Guglielmites, reflecting the reforming spirit of the age, is one of many such sects in the late medieval period who were reacting to contemporary political, religious, and social challenges. While in many ways their doctrinal ideas echo those of similar groups, such as followers of the trinitarian teachings of the radical Joachim of Fiore, what distinguished the Guglielmites from these groups was their belief that the Holy Spirit would be feminine.

In order to understand the Guglielmites, their founder, followers and subsequent leaders who continued to create and promote the doctrine of

2 The main documentary source for the Guglielmites is the inquisitorial process against them from their trial in 1300 of which only a portion is extant. Inquisitorial sources are problematic in general for a number of reasons, not least of which is the inherent bias of the prosecution to its subject. In addition, limited perspective, selective preservation, interrogation bias, and interpretation issues must be considered when utilizing such material. However, as these are practically the only sources available for this group, they must be utilized but also critically assessed. The Guglielmites inquisitorial trial records are collected and translated i, F. Tocca. "Il processo dei Guglielmiti," in *Reale Accademia dei Lincei, memorie della classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche Rendiconti*, 5 series, 8 (Rome: 1899), 309–42,351–84, 407–32, 437–69. Originals from MS A 227 inf of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana Milan, *Processus ab inquisitoribus haereticae pravitatis confecti Mediolani anno Domini MCCC contra Guillelmam Bohemam*; They have also been collected and translated by Marina Benedetti, "Filii Spiritus Sanctii: Un'aggregazione religiosa per I 'tempi nuovi,'" in *Religiones novae* (*Quaderni di storia religiosa*, 2) (Verona: 1995), 204–227; and excerpts in English by Treavor Dean, *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* (Manchester: 2000), 88–94. See also Felice Tocco, *Guglielma Boema e i Guglielmiti: Memoria Del Socio Felice Tocco*, (Rome: 1901).

Guglielma's feminine divinity and millennialist expectations after her death, their activities must be viewed as indicative of the intersection of popular piety and its apostolic expression, criticism of the established church, and unease with the changes wrought to society by the rapid urbanization of the era and finally, the desire of women to engage actively in evangelical religiosity and social activism. Evidence of an apocalyptic mood that permeated medieval society in the 13th and 14th centuries, the Guglielmites were part of a vibrant popular religious culture that included women in tertiary orders and those who followed the leadership of intellective female mystics, all frustrated with the insensitivity if not outright corruption of patriarchal church leadership. The Guglielmites were not so much anticipating the end of the world or the coming of the Antichrist but were more in keeping with the millennialist view of their role in ushering in a final, joyous age which would come before the end, and for them, this age would be initiated by a woman.

To contemporaries, Guglielma's earthly identity was shrouded in mystery and speculation which only aided in the construction of her legend. She arrived in Milan around 1260, a middle-aged woman accompanied by a young adult male, possibly her son. Although dressing plainly and living quite simply, she carried herself in a regal manner and rumors circulated of her being a princess of Bohemian descent, possibly the daughter of the current king of Bohemia. After her death, followers Andreas Saramita and Mirano da Garbagnate travelled to Bohemia in a failed attempt to verify these assertions.[3] Recently, several scholars have found evidence for the truth of these claims[4] but at the time they were unsubstantiated yet intriguing enough to stimulate public interest. Guglielma lived simply as a penitent or a *pinzochere*[5] in a house provided for her by the monks at the Cistercian monastery of Chiaravalle. She quickly gained a reputation as a wise holy woman whose guidance was sought in issues from

3 There has been much debate regarding Guglielma's purported royal lineage. Early scholars including Benedetti claimed Guglielma was not descended from Bohemian royalty, but recent scholarship suggests there is evidence to support the claim. See below, n. 4. For discussion of dispute see Peterson, "Social Roles," 205.

4 Newman, *Virile Woman*, 185.

5 In medieval Italy, women who wished to live independently but piously were loosely defined as *pinzochere* who practiced active penitence and good works and while often 'attached' to a third order, were not required to take vows or follow a certain rule. For more on the medieval Italian *pinzochere* and the importance of the third order female religious see Anna Benvenuti Papi, "Mendicant Friars and Female Pinzochere in Tuscany: From Social Marginality to Models of Sanctity," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, eds., Margery J. Schneider, trans. (Chicago: 1996), 84–95.

personal health to local politics. She dressed simply in a plain brown tunic and counseled her followers to live correctly, avoiding such sins as oath taking and usury.[6] During her life her followers, whom she called her *famiglia*, believed she was a *vivens sanctus*, or living saint.[7] Over the course of her time in Milan and after her death she took on an increasingly divine persona.

Guglielma's ability to move about freely in urban Italian society, act independently, and gain wide support, reflects the apostolic atmosphere of urban Italy in the high Middle Ages and its openness to female religiosity. In northern Italy in particular, the religious atmosphere of the day was dynamic, creative, and non-gender exclusive, but sometimes veered dangerously toward the heretical. As a *pinzochera*, Guglielma would have been recognized by contemporaries as one of many women who sought religious life outside of an established order or religious house but contributed greatly to fulfilling social needs for the poor, ill, and needy. Often these *pinzochere* were identified with a tertiary group but usually still functioned somewhat independently within society at large.[8] Guglielma is historically associated with the monks of the traditional Cistercian abbey of Chiaravalle, and they received her body and relics upon death, but during her life as a *pinzochera* she was probably most closely allied with the Humiliati, an apostolic lay order of men and women, but predominately women, who were engaged in apostolic living with an emphasis on alleviating economic inequity through charitable works and the production of inexpensive cloth for the poor. In an inventory of Humiliati houses from 1334 there are 26 individual Humiliati *domus* listed in Milan.[9] The Inquisition trials mention two houses associated with the Guglielmites, the houses of Biassono and Viboldone.[10] Two of Guglielma's most ardent followers were the Humiliati sister Maifreda da Pirovano who was elected *papessa*, and Andreas Saramita, a layman and chronicler for the group. Maifreda was a resident of the Humiliati house of Biassono.[11] She was also closely tied to some of the wealthier members

6 Peterson, "Social Roles"; 205, Newman, "Agnes of Prague," 566.

7 Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 7.

8 Benvenuta Papi, "Mendicant Friars," 95.

9 Sally Brasher, *Women of the Humiliati: A Lay Religious Order in Medieval Civic Life* (London: 2004), 51. See also Frances Andrews, *The Early Humiliati* (Cambridge: 2004).

10 Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 7. For more on Viboldone see M. Tagliabue, Gli Umiliati a Viboldone, in *L'abbazia di* Viboldone (Rovigio: 1979), 9–41; and Marco Lunari, "Storiografia sugli Umiliati tra quattro e cinquecento," in Maria Pia Alberzoni, Annamaria Ambrosioni, and Alfredo Lucioni, eds., *Sulle Tracce degli Umiliati* (Milan: 1970), 45–67.

11 The Humiliati house of Biassono is referred to repeatedly in the inquisition testimony and appears central to the movement. However, a domus Biassono does not appear in the inventories of Humiliati houses of 1298 or 1344. There are, however, mentions of a sister house in Milan called Blas [no]which is possibly the same house. In fact, one can find a

of Milanese society. Their protection and patronage was surely instrumental in the early freedom allowed to her activities and those of her followers. It is always difficult to separate the political, familial, social, and spiritual in urban Italian religious activity of the era and the movement which developed around Guglielma illustrates this challenge.

1 Guglielmite Millennialist Doctrine

Guglielma does not appear to have personally claimed to be the Holy Spirit incarnate, but we cannot know for sure as there is no written account of her life or beliefs directly from her. In fact, although some followers were proclaiming her divinity even before she died, there is evidence that she denied such claims.[12] She presented herself as a simple, humble woman. According to testimony from her followers she vocally denied their deification and claimed she was a "wretched woman," and warned her followers to deny such blasphemy.[13] She did entrust a favored follower, layman Andreass Saramita, to record her activities and teachings and collect them for posterity. Saramita, together with Maifreda, who composed litanies and hymns to Guglielma, constructed a doctrine to guide followers through the new religious age that would be ushered in upon her resurrection.[14] There is some debate as to what degree Guglielma would have even recognized or approved the zealous doctrine created by her most ardent followers after her death.[15] Maifreda had visions in which she claimed Guglielma presented herself as the Holy Spirit and Saramita claimed his new theology was dictated by the holy woman, but it is just as possible that the two devotees were equally influenced by wider heretical groups such as the followers of Joachim of Fiore which they then incorporated into their devotion

variation in spelling in several of the subsequent sources on the Guglielmites eliciting some confusion. Therefore, we cannot say for sure that this house was predominately a sister house but the evidence from the trial suggests this was so. See Brasher, *Women of the Humiliati*, 45–61. There are several possible reasons for the lack of evidence for Biassono; they may have been subsumed by a larger house (possibly Viboldone) or disbanded after the dissolution of the Guglielmites. Caciola has argued persuasively that the Guglielmites were also associated with the more established Humiliati house of Viboldone that was closely related to the monastery of Chiaravalle as evidenced by a mural on the ceiling of the church there. Viboldone was a larger, predominately male Humiliati house that was regularized and protected by the Church. See Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 1–5.

12 Tocca, "Il processo," 334.

13 Newman, *Virile Woman*, 187; Tocca, "*Il processo*," 461–62.

14 Tocca, "Il processo," 331, 333.

15 Newman, *Virile Woman*, 186, 192–93.

to Guglielma.[16] It is possible to view the Guglielmites as one of many manifestations of a reforming apocalyptic and millennialist popular current that compelled many pious urbanites to turn to the teachings of a radical leader like Joachim to calm their anxieties as they felt the traditional church and its outmoded teachings were not.

Much in the spirit of the followers of Joachim, the Guglielmites believed they lived in the last age of man. Joachim focused on the Book of Revelation, but rather than see its allegorical nature, he offered a literal and historical interpretation which necessitated the fulfillment of its millennialist prophesies.[17] Joachim's trinitarian perspective of history held that there were three ages of man. First, the Age of the God the Father, expressed in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament as the initial covenant between God and the Jews. Next, the age of Christ the Son, chronicled in the New Testament and institutionalized by the foundation and expansion of the patriarchal Christian Church. Finally, Joachim held there would be a last age of man, the age of the Holy Spirit. During this age the Holy Spirit would "bring to fulfillment all human spiritual knowledge and perfection, and it would flower in the fullness of post-apocalyptic eternity."[18] Saramita, Maifreda, and the followers of Guglielma believed this last age would necessarily be feminine. Her *famiglia* proclaimed that just as Jesus, as the son of God, had come to save Christians, the latest incarnation must complete his task and save all humanity, including Jews, pagans, Muslims, and women. They believed that due to the corrupted hierarchical and patriarchal Church, a male Spirit incarnate would immediately be suspect and killed by jealous Church leaders and the world would perish.[19] Their millennialist vision held that a new age, ushered in by a female *papessa* would lead those outside the church back to the righteous path with the establishment of a new *ecclesia*.

Joachim of Fiore did not prophesize a specific date for the return of the Holy Spirit, but followers had read in his writings references to the date 1260, which is when Guglielma first appeared in Milan.[20] Joachim articulated a principle

16 Ibid., 186–187. For an Introduction to Joachim of Fiori, see Matthias Riedl, ed., *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore* (*Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition*, volume 75) (Leiden: 2018). Also see Delno C. West, and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington: 1983); and Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2009).

17 Andres Cunningham and Peter Ole Gruell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine, and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, UK: 2000), 22.

18 Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 10. For more on Joachim of Fiore's influence see Marjorie Reves, *The Influence of Prophesy in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: 1976); and Bernard Ginn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality* (Mahwah, NF: 1979), 97–147.

19 Tocca, "Il processo," 332, 340, 372–73.

20 Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 10.

of concordance which held that certain patterns or individuals would appear during each epoch referencing the ages of the past. Guglielma's followers found many of these concordant similarities with Christ in the life of Guglielma. For example, just as the archangel Gabriel had announced the eminent incarnation of the son to the Virgin Mary, the archangel Raphael had announced the eminent incarnation of the Holy Spirit to Constanza, queen of Bohemia, purportedly Guglielma's mother.[21] Guglielma was believed to work miracles: Saramita testified of one Master Beltrame de Ferno who was cured of a "mark" he had in his eye, and Albertone de Novate from whom she removed a fistula.[22] In addition, followers claimed her body bore the stigmata as had Christ's.[23]

The testimonies before the Inquisition which comprise the totality of information on the group's doctrine and practices, are not always clear or in agreement. Some of Guglielma's followers testified that she herself claimed to be the Holy Spirit. One witness claimed that Guglielma saw her own body as the body of the Eucharist.[24] Other followers proclaimed her humility and disbelief that she was anything more than a humble servant of Christ. While it is unclear if Guglielma believed herself to be the Holy Spirit, her lived experience modeled many of these known spiritual motifs as well as much of the popular evangelical activism of the age. She taught her followers and tried to live at least an apostolic life, if not an outright imitation of Christ's. If, in her life, she was thought to practice *imitatio Christi*, after her death, her followers developed a doctrine that elevated her to a status equal or surpassing that of Christ. It is for this that they were branded heretics.

The extant documents for the Guglielmites mainly come from the transcription of the trial and are based on the confessions of some of Guglielma's followers.[25] The inquisitors reconstructed the Guglielmites' doctrine from these testimonies, but as these are from the trial, they are most concerned with those elements that they perceived as heretical.[26] Still, we can discern

21 Ibid.

22 Dean, *Towns of Italy*, 89.

23 Tocca, "Il processo," 371–373.

24 Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 11.

25 MS A 227 inf, Biblioteca Ambrosiana Milan.

26 The primary inquisitorial documents come from the notary Beltrame Salvagno which include about two thirds of the interrogation records. The sentencing is recorded by the notary Manfredo da Cera. Seventeenth-century documents on the Guglielmites were used to reinforce the increased persecution of heretics by establishing examples from the past. These authors exaggerated all heretical claims of the Guglielmites and even accused Guglielma of being a woman of low morals who brought young men and women together for orgies. See below, p. 203. For a complete discussion on the extant documents

the basic points of their constructed doctrine, contained in fourteen main concepts. First, they professed Guglielma to be the Holy Spirit incarnate in a female form. And as she was the Holy Spirit and therefore divine, she was superior to Mary, the mother of God, and all other saints. That she died as a corporeal form is explained by equating this to Christ's also corporeal death.

Her followers were gathered during the Easter season in 1300 because they were promised her resurrection on Pentecost. She was born on Pentecost and her *famiglia* took this as a sign of the day of her resurrection. They believed that she would appear to them before her resurrection just as Christ had appeared to his followers. In a contradictory portion of their testimony before the inquisitors, some held that she had already risen and occasionally appeared before her followers, others believed her resurrection was imminent. Not unlike the indulgences that are granted to pilgrims visiting Christ's tomb in Jerusalem, followers believed indulgences would be granted to those venturing to Guglielma's tomb in the monastery of Chiaravalle.

Perhaps the most heretical, or at least ecclesiastically threatening, aspect of the Guglielmites' beliefs dealt with their prescribed role for the very live Humiliati sister, Maifreda, the group's chosen *papessa*. They equated her with Christ's Apostle Peter who had been entrusted with the Church and the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Just as Peter celebrated mass and preached in Jerusalem, they believed Maifreda should preach in Milan and then in Rome. She would settle in Rome in the Apostolic See where she would replace the sitting pope. They saw Maifreda as true pope, with all the authority of a true pope. They believed the papacy and the cardinals would cede authority to Maifreda and that she would choose four wise men or women to rewrite the current gospels and create the new doctrine. Maifreda was tasked with baptizing Jews, Muslims, and others outside the Roman church. As Christ had apostles so would Guglielma, and they would suffer for following her as Christ's followers had done. Here, Saramita equates the Roman persecutors of Christ with the Holy Office of the Inquisition.[27]

The Guglielmite doctrine was deemed heretical in terms of its feminine inception and belief in followers' ability to determine the imminence of a millennial era, but not to the extent of other groups of the time such as the Spiritual Franciscans and Fra Dolcino's militant order. They did not engage in

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see, Patrizia Maria Costa, *Guglielma la Boema, l'"Eretica" di Chiaravalle: Uno scorcio di vita religiosa Milanese nel secolo XIII*, (Milan: 1985), 12–15.

27 Tocca, "Il processo," 323, 340, 372–373. English translation in Dean *Towns of Italy*, 93–94. Also see discussion in Luisa Muraro, *Guglielma e Maifreda: Storia di un'eresia feminista* (Milan: 1985), 137–139.

mass popular preaching or embrace apostolic poverty. In many ways they were traditionalists. Their constructed doctrine and their veneration and liturgical rituals mirrored orthodoxy in most ways except they were led by a woman and thus, could not be approved by the Church.[28]

2 The Inquisition

The Guglielmites were first brought under investigation for heresy in 1284. This included Maifreda, the Saramita family, and others. They were cautioned and released with the admonition to cease heretical activities. The Inquisition was forced to move more aggressively against the group because of events leading up to Easter Sunday in 1300. This was an auspicious year for Latin Christians and evangelical groups. It was a Jubilee year for the papacy, which was under political assault, but was also associated with an apocalyptic revolution in the writings of some groups such as the followers of Joachim of Fiore. Guglielma's followers believed that she would be resurrected on Pentecost which fell on May 29, 1300. Therefore, Easter would begin the Pentecost season in which followers would need to prepare for the coming of the new Holy Spirit. The enthusiasm among her followers reached a fevered pitch as they organized for the event. In this city whose commercial wealth was built around the cloth industry, followers created for Maifreda a luxurious gown and cloak in fine purple wool, likely embossed with pearls that had been donated by members and with a silver clasp and gold encrusted sandals for her feet.[29] On Easter Sunday, Maifreda dressed in these priestly robes, and accompanied by male and female followers, led the mass as would a priest and even elevated the host.

As part of her image as *imitatio Christi*, Guglielma's followers believed that she would be denounced by her own Judas. This came to pass as one follower, Gerardo da Novazzano, reported on the Easter activities to the Inquisition.[30] After which, for nearly six months, the inquisitors took testimony from at least sixty witnesses. We do not have the entire trial transcripts, of two notebooks devoted to the interrogation phase only one partial notebook survives. There are a few other documents, all from the pen of the inquisitors. There are only a few records of petitions for forgiveness and one extant sentence record. Those who asked forgiveness were fined and required to wear yellow crosses to signify their status as heretics. The one extant sentence was of Humiliati

28 Newman, *Virile Women*, 189.

29 Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 15.

30 Ibid.

sister Giacoma dei Bassani. It identifies her as a relapsed heretic who had been interviewed in an earlier inquest. She was condemned to execution by secular authorities.[31] While we do not have a record of the conviction or execution of Saramita or Maifreda, there are subsequently referred to in the trial as "late" and Saramita's wife as "widow" suggesting they had been executed.[32] We know that after the conclusion of the Inquisition, Guglielma's remains were disinterred and reburied in a regular cemetery and that the group disbanded, or at least they do not leave a further evidentiary trail.

Elliot has successfully argued that the trial of the Guglielmites illustrates a trend in medieval spiritual movements and their interaction with the Inquisition towards the alteration by the ecclesiastical body to transform a process that could initially be perceived an orchestrated attempt by her followers to have her canonized into a process of condemnation. During their interviews, Guglielma's followers referenced her claim to be the Holy Spirit as well as her stigmata and miracles they claimed she performed as support for their belief that she was a *sanctus vivus*. The ceremony and creation of appropriate elaborate burial gowns and the subsequent reinternment of her relics all illustrate how her cult developed, not directly from her claim to divinity, but from Maifreda and Andreas's attempts to elevate her status and create a popular movement around her.[33] Guglielma herself was probably not heretical in her life or teachings, but the popular movement that developed, possibly in spite of her wishes, attempted to have her recognized by the Church as, ultimately the Holy Spirit, but at the very least a saint within the orthodox tradition.

3 Gendered Spirituality

The Guglielmites should be viewed as part of a larger movement of female religiosity in the period that included various manifestations from the increased popularity of traditional monastic orders to the urban phenomenon of tertiary apostolic movements such as the Humiliati and Beguines. The movements reflected the common urban experience of insecurity and anxiety caused by rapid economic diversification and the corresponding social challenges. Both men and women experienced these societal stressors, but they experienced

31 Tocca, "Il processo," 334, 360. For a complete list of those mentioned in the trial see Costa, *Guglielma*, 121–124.

32 Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: 2004), 154.

33 Ibid., 154–157.

them differently. Apostolicism was central to many of the urban movements but tended to resonate with those more economically challenged. The followers of Guglielma and Maifreda may have appreciated the apostolic ideas, but their emphasis was more on the *imitatio Christi*. This was partially due to the fact that most of the followers were among the wealthier citizens of Milan and so not as economically insecure. However, they were still reacting to the instability of the urban political and religious climate and found a sisterhood in these causes with those members of the apostolic Humiliati.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the Guglielmite movement is the nature of their view towards gender. There is some debate among scholars as to whether or not the group was proposing the superiority of women. Certainly, the clearest indication of the gendered nature of the group is the fact that both Guglielma and Maifreda were women and the promised resurrected Holy Spirit, feminine, but beyond that gender is less important than doctrine.

While the idea of medieval people embracing the concept of a feminine divine seems improbable to us the idea is not as anachronistic as the general experience of women in the Middle Ages, or misogynist doctrine might suggest. In medieval theology, God was neither a man nor a woman. Identifying biological sex requires biological organs. God has none. The imposition of a gendered identity was fixed more on the traits and actions of God – he was active not passive, a lawgiver and creator not an empty vessel. These were characteristics that were associated with men, and the male gender, and thus were affixed to an understanding of God. But even this was not a consistent typology. Some of God's traits were rather feminine, and throughout the Old Testament, God is presented in feminized or maternal constructs, as a mother giving birth or baking, weaving, and sewing. The Holy Spirit is more difficult to gender as its actions are less definitive. What exactly is the Holy Spirit? At times, the only gendered element is applied linguistically. For example, in some areas that practice Orthodox Rites the linguistic term for spirit is feminine and thus references to the Holy Spirit are feminine. This gender fluidity allowed medieval Christians to conceptualize the Holy Spirit as a spiritual ideal rather than a bodily form.[34] In fact, they may have been more open to the ideal of gender fluidity within their conception of the trinity than post-Reformation Christians.

The feminization of spirituality reached its zenith in the 13th and 14th centuries. As Caroline Walker Bynum has so successfully argued, lay piety of the era which focused on Christ's humanity and on Christian empathy and charity

34 Michelle M. Sauer, *Gender in Medieval Culture* (London: 2015), 112–115.

(all associated with feminine traits) witnessed the popularity, among men and women, of the Cult of the Virgin Mary, vocative and intellective mystics, and female sanctity.[35] Placing Guglielma and Maifreda into this genre of pious women leaders would not have stretched credulity or challenged patriarchal norms per se. Only when these women stepped into forbidden spaces such as the pulpit and were accorded unauthorized veneration, did they get into trouble.

The idea of feminized Christian leadership was not novel either but reflected a recurrent, but frequently suppressed, impulse dating back to the first centuries of Christianity. It is now accepted wisdom that women were essential to the rise and spread of Christianity in the first three centuries before its legalization. Even Paul's oft quoted prohibition of women speaking in church (1 Corinthians 14:34–36[36]) has been contextualized and its misogynistic implications disputed by most scholars. His many other letters and writings directed to women and his designation of women as deaconesses serve as adequate evidence of their early participation and leadership.[37] There is universal acceptance that women held positions of honor and even authority in the early church. Peter Brown's seminal work on gender in early Christianity suggests early Church leaders allowed for women's participation and encouraged their collaboration. This early acceptance had more to do with increasing converts and enforcing adherence to Christianity than to any overt appreciation of women's spiritual dominance, but the outcome was a level of gender equity in the practice of religiosity.[38]

Women were always attracted to Christianity in greater numbers than men, and even once the process of institutionalization of the religion began, they were used to assist in the spread and acceptance of the faith to the far reaches of the Roman empire but were increasingly closed out of Church leadership. The earliest evidence of how women were being excluded from such

35 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, (Berkeley: 1982), 17–18.

36 "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" Bible: New International Version (NIV).

37 Rodney Stark, "Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: The Role of Women," *Sociology of Religion* 56/3 (1995), 229–44. https://doi.org/10.2307/3711820. See also Christopher Stenschke, "Paul's References to Women in His Letter to the Romans and Their Function in the Argument of the Letter: A Modest Proposal," *Neotestamentica* 54/1 (2020), 1–45.

38 Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. Lectures on the History of Religions*, new ser., no. 13 (New York: 1988).

opportunities comes from a text from the 3rd century that illuminates a jurisdictional struggle between bishops and widows. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* chronicles the judicial attempts by the Church to establish a patriarchal institutional framework. They were confronted with the issue of widows holding de facto semi-official authority over congregations and were compelled to enact legislation that forbade women's participation in general from leadership functions.[39] We do have evidence of influential abbesses and intellective mystic leaders from later centuries and some intriguing evidence of the continuation of the ordination of women in northern Europe before they were banned in the 12th century, but for most women the path to official leadership was increasingly closed off by the high Middle Ages.[40] Despite being excluded from influential positions, women continued to follow Christianity in ever increasing numbers and degrees of piousness. It appears that they rarely chose to be segregated from men in their devotional practices, or at least gender was not usually a primary concern. The increasing program of enclosure of women into gendered monastic institutions was a policy of the Church. Often, as is evident in the high and late Middle Ages, when the Church was perceived to be inadequately fulfilling the spiritual needs of its faithful, women were embraced in popular culture for their pious leadership or exemplary religiosity.[41] The proliferation of mystics, female saints, and tertiary groups of women responding to communal spiritual and social needs illustrates this phenomenon.

However, the attraction of female sanctity was not limited to or by gender. The Guglielmite followers included men and women and their focus was reform and rebirth with a new Church. While in practice the new church would have been led by a woman and the resurrected spirit feminine, beyond that there is an absence of gendered ideology for the faithful. There were contemporary models for female spiritual sanctity and the veneration of Guglielma was possibly equated in the minds of her followers with similar female religious exemplars. The popular cult venerations of Saints Catherine and Margaret were used by followers as a cover for their devotions to Guglielma, and it is possible to see an appreciation of the traditional role of these strong women as guides to Maifreda and her followers.[42] In addition, as Guglielma's followers

39 Elizabeth A. Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History," *Church History* 70/3 (2001), 395–426. https://doi.org/10.2307/3654496.

40 Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford: 2008).

41 See, for example, André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, ed. Daniel Ethan Bornstein, translated by Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame: 1993).

42 Newman, *Virile Women*, 191.

believed her to be the daughter of King Ottokar I of Bohemia and Constance of Hungary, they may have appreciated that she could have been related to Elizabeth of Hungary, Agnes of Bohemia, and Margaret of Hungary, all prestigious holy women.[43] Still, revered as they may have been, these women were not held up as superior female figures so much as superior spiritual figures whose gender made them recognizable and familiar.

The greatest evidence for the argument against seeing the groups' original purpose to be the elevation of women's religious experience above men's is the role Andreas Saramita and the Cistercian brothers of Chiaravalle played in the promotion of Guglielma's sect. Peterson and Newman have successfully argued that Saramita and Maifreda had complementary roles in the formation of the group. Maifreda was the public face and was elected *papessa* acting as Guglielma's chosen one. She led mass and ministered to the *familia* as they awaited the Second Coming of Guglielma.[44] Witness testimony suggests she was the primary teacher but especially to women. Saramita also preached but mainly to men. These gendering designations probably reflected the reality of gendered social space in medieval urban society more than any theological concern. That Guglielma's followers included both men and women strongly suggests there was no gendered intent in the groups' doctrine. The Humiliati house of Biassono, which was probably predominately women,[45] served as a gendered space where women could comfortably gather to hear the teachings of Maifreda and venerate her relics. Chiaravalle was a more orthodox space geared towards the elevation of a *sancta vita* in a more traditional manner, open to both men and women in a more public facing format.[46] The Cistercian monastery was also a large, well respected monastic community that was entrenched in the social and political scene in Milan. Brothers traditionally filled a role as popular preachers and confessors for the community of Milan.[47] But both the Humiliati house and Chiaravalle played an important role in the sect and there does not appear to be any overt competition between the two.

Saramita was most involved in creating the doctrine of the new Church and planning for the revolution which would occur upon Guglielma's return. It is possible to see a gendered parity in this created doctrine. According to Peterson, "Thus Andreas [Saramita], the male partner, symbolized divine

43 Peterson, "Social Roles," 205.

44 Newman, *Virile Women*, 197; Peterson, "Social Roles," 209–214.

45 See discussion above, n. 11.

46 Ibid.

47 Maria Agata Pincelli, *Churchmen and Urban Government in Late Medieval Italy, c.1200–c.1450: Cases and Contexts*, ed. Frances Andrews (Cambridge: 2013), 239, 246, 248.

authority (*logos*) as the theologian of the Word, while Maifreda, the female partner, signified holiness (*sanctitas*), or the mystical spirit of Guglielma revealed through Maifreda's own body."[48] Over time Guglielma's tie to divinity and temporal role in the new Church elevated her to a superior position over Saramita and this was ultimately the group's undoing with the official Church. It may not have been the intent, or central to the emerging doctrine, but the perception that the Second Coming would be feminine and Maifreda's resulting elevation to both spiritual and temporal leader as prospective *papessa* upset the acceptable balance in orthodox medieval religiosity that allowed for the ecstatic spirituality of mystics and other religious women as long as they were overseen and regulated by male temporal authority.

Still, what emerges from Guglielmite doctrine, and the demographic composition of their followers, is a perhaps unintentional policy of embracing gender equity. The Guglielmites did not consider the importance of celibacy or virginity, so central to orthodoxy, and did not place a value on worldly denial. In this they reflected the earliest form of Christianity when Christ gathered followers from across the gender and social spectrum and welcomed all. This, then was the truest form of *imitatio Christi*. In this era, specifically in northern Italy, we can view the breadth and variety of female religiosity as it reflects an attempt to go beyond gender. Luisa Muraro calls this a feminist movement where the desire was not articulated as a wish for equality with men, but as a wish for an equal relationship with God, or one that was not mediated by men.[49]

However, as evidenced by the recurrent vision of a feminine divine historically, and the increased activity and appreciation of mystics and female saints of the era, I do think we can see the Guglielmites' excitement over the appearance of Guglielma and her possible identity as the Holy Spirit as reflective of a reaction based in part on gender. Male leadership in the Church and in the political arena in Milan was perceived as failing. It is not hard to imagine that followers, including men, might have regarded the possibility of feminine leadership as representative of a different option. While there may had been no inherent idea of female superiority in the Guglielmite doctrine, the possibilities presented by female leaders attracted followers from anxious citizens with the intriguing possibility that female leadership might offer novel solutions to their perceived apocalyptic concerns.

48 Peterson, "Social Roles," 215.

49 Muraro, *Guglielma e Maifreda*, 12–13.

4 Popular Lay Piety in Italy

The Guglielmites and their related order, the Humiliati, also represent the apostolic current that confronted the perceived inaction or corruption of the Church in the region. Throughout the high Middle Ages, the medieval papacy was challenged to accept and reward the zealous piety of myriad groups of religious who sought active and creative ways of expressing their faith while also curbing their excessive enthusiasm which often strayed into heresy. This was particularly true of the increasing popularity of urban female groups who resisted traditional monastic enclosure in favor of socially responsive action in aid of their fellow citizens. Often, as in the case of the Humiliati, the Church's initial reaction was to condemn such groups as heretics. But this did not deter these followers, and Pope Innocent III, at the Lateran Council of 1215, was forced to recognize the necessity of approving such activity with restrictions and ecclesiastical oversight. However, he also believed that such activism must end there and decreed there be no new orders of this sort.[50] Clearly, the proliferation of groups such as the Bianchi, the Spiritual Franciscans, Humiliati, Beguines, and Guglielmites, throughout the 13th century indicates the failure of this intended prohibition.

Popular piety took many forms in the Italian cities and much of did not originate from a defined doctrine or ideology. Evangelical movements often commenced somewhat organically and were later directed and codified by a leader or leaders, or, as in the case of the Guglielmites, veneration of a holy individual morphed into a typology that was familiar and understandable for that familiarity. Many zealous adherents of these movements were harking back to the earliest forms of Christianity and recreating or reenacting the first centuries of the faith before its institutionalization. Common to many was a belief that they were living through a time of spiritual crisis that either heralded the coming apocalypse or the last age of man. There was also a consistent theme of dissatisfaction with current ecclesiastical institutions.

Followers of Guglielma came to associate elements of her life with that of Christ's. And while Guglielma may have been attempting only to live in *imitatio Christi*, her followers, under the leadership of Maifreda and Saramita, took their reverence a step further, identifying her as the Holy Spirit and assigning her a whole new Church. After her death, Guglielma's followers participated in traditional devotional activities that would have been appropriate for many

50 Brasher, *Women of the Humiliati*, 30–33.

orthodox saints. Initially, they paid visits to her shrine at Chiaravalle, lit candles, and listened to the preaching of the monks there. The monks kept two saints' days in her honor and her image was enshrined in paintings in local churches. In fact, the monks of Chiaravalle were greatly responsible for the preservation of Guglielma's cult. They held festivals in her honor in October and on August 24, St. Bartholomeus' day, which was the anniversary of her death. In addition to welcoming and feeding pilgrims, the monks gave sermons on her goodness, comparing her to the moon and the stars and crediting her with curing ill monks. On one occasion, the monk Marchixius de Veddano was said to have preached a sermon in Guglielma's honor which attracted over 129 men and women.[51] The popularity of her traditional cult status is supported by the evidence that of these 129 attendees only 46 were avowed Guglielmites. None of this activity would have been unusual or inherently problematic. The devotion of saints' cults was a common aspect of the medieval urban landscape.

As Guglielma was not a verified saint, these activities strayed to the edges of approved veneration but might not have provoked ecclesiastical response. But once the followers' activities and beliefs went a bit further and became codified in doctrine, with leadership from an outsider, and a woman, the Church's fear of the small steps to heresy were confirmed. The promise of Guglielma's resurrection on Pentecost lead to celebrations by followers during Easter season. Some of the monks secretly laid the host at her crypt under a painting of her, the iconography of which suggested she was the Holy Spirit.[52] Once Maifreda began to be recognized as Guglielma's vicar on earth, she blessed these offerings distributed them to followers and started to sermonize there. In the beginning these activities were done with much secrecy, clearly indicating the group was aware of their transgressive significance.[53] But soon, the wave of popularity carried the group into the spotlight.

In the rise of the Guglielmites it is possible to see the evolution of a popular movement from its inception by the veneration accorded a *vivens sanctus* within a community, to the establishment of a new *ecclesia* to their denouncement as heretics. Once Saramita and Maifreda had set the outlines of Guglielma's life, death, and principles on paper and in the pulpit, her followers could embrace the prospect of an answer to their social and religious anxieties and a new Church that would recognize their passion and take them

51 Wessley, "Thirteenth Century Guglielmites," 301.

52 Caciola examines the frescoes on the walls of both the abbey of Viboldone and Chiaravalle, for evidence of the veneration of Guglielma and the tie between the Humiliati and the brothers of Chiaravalle. Caciola, "A Guglielmite Trinity," 1–3.

53 Newman, *Virile Women*, 190–92.

back to early Christianity, *primitiva ecclesia*. While we may dispute whether or not Guglielma saw herself as the Holy Spirit or not, the outcome of her followers believing so is clear.

The two religious groups associated with Guglielma and her followers illustrate two branches of medieval urban religiosity. The rural Cistercian house of Chiaravalle represents the more recognized and approved response to increased passionate religiosity but its founding and presence in Milan also reflects elements of the city's politics. Bernard of Clairvaux was tasked by the papacy with travelling to Milan in the 1130s to establish a Cistercian Abbey there, in order to encourage Milan's obedience to the papacy and the empire. It was also closely tied to the politically powerful families of Milan. Martino della Torre was buried in the Abbey in 1263.[54]

The Humiliati, whose group houses dotted the urban landscape throughout northern Italy, reflect the less orthodox current of popular lay piety that permeated all levels of society. The Humiliati house of Biassono played an important role in Guglielma's life and devotion. After her death, water and wine that had been used in her translation for burial were placed in a vial on a special altar constructed within the house. There was purportedly a fresco of Guglielma there similar to that in Chiaravalle. Maifreda used the liquid from the relic to anoint the faithful and heal the sick. She also gave sermons to the predominately female followers gathered there.[55] This is a singularly unusual activity for a Humiliati house. They did not typically engage in preaching or the veneration of icons. Their focus was on communal charitable activity, and they had skated just above heretical charges since their approval in 1215 by not engaging in such overtly unorthodox activities.[56]

Maifreda's relationship to the Humiliati of Biassono was far from straightforward. She lived at the house during Guglielma's life and after her death. However, after 1297 she moved from that house to house of fellow *famiglia* the Cotica family. She testified that she did so because the sisters at the house of Biassono reprimanded her for her preaching there.[57] This suggests both that Maifreda's role in the group was increasingly public and problematic, and that the Humiliati were less than comfortable with this activity. One curious aspect of the Inquisition trials is that many of them were held in various churches that were attached to Humiliati houses in the city.[58]

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54 Pincelli, *Churchmen*, 239, 246, 248.
55 Tocca, "Il processo," 424, 431.
56 Brasher, *Women of the Humiliati*, 7.
57 Tocca, "Il processo," 331–333.
58 Dean, *Towns of Italy*, 88–94.

Barbara Newman has suggested that the followers of Guglielma pursued two paths after her death. Those who were more closely associated with Biassono and the Humiliati pursued more private devotional activity and perhaps a continuation of *imitatio Christi* elements of the sect that more closely mirrored their *vive apostolica* identity. Other followers gravitated to the more public, approved, cult devotion embraced by the monks of Chiaravalle.[59] Ironically, it was the activities which occurred in the more public, approved arena of the Cistercian abbey that brought the group down. From the trial records one can sense that a possible animosity developed between the two branches. Some of the followers outside the Cistercian sphere felt the monks had gone too far in their venerations and had thus led the group to the inquisitors' door. In an interview with Saramita, the inquisitor Gerardus Novazano warns of the Cistercians' overzealousness.[60]

Despite their differences, the fact that these two groups who expressed their desired piety so differently were united in their veneration of Guglielma illustrates both her popular appeal in the city of Milan, but also suggests a widespread current of millennialist feelings that transcended traditional differences in devotional and religious life. It also illustrates the openness of orthodox religious movements such as the Cistercians to novel lay religiosity. This in turn perhaps reflects their dissatisfaction with the institutional Church and traditional doctrine and aligns them with other similar groups such as the Spiritual Franciscans.

5 Italian Politics

Groups such as the Guglielmites and the Humiliati are conspicuously Italian even if their millennialist or apostolic values reflect a wider religious current. The politics of the region of Lombardy in particular stimulated a very specific reaction among religious lay men and women. Milan, at the end of the 13th century was holding on to its constructed mythology as a republic, while increasingly living realistically under a military strongman type of government. Rival noblemen nominally representing the interests of different groups of the *popolo* had been waging decades of covert and outright warfare for control of the city. The della Torre family's hold was being challenged by the ascending Visconti family, whose leader, Ottone was also the anointed head of the Church in Milan.[61]

59 Newman, "Agnes of Prague", 6.

60 Elliot, *Proving Women*, 159.

61 Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: 1988).

All of north and central Italy was long a battleground for the imperial aspirations of the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. At the time of Guglielma's life and death, the increasingly political Church in Rome and its representatives afield were embroiled in the very dirty politics of violent regime change in Milan. We may know about the Guglielmites, and they may have been allowed to practice for as long as they were, because they were closely tied to some of the major political players of the day. The son of the Milanese ruler, Galeazzo Visconti, was counted among those questioned by the inquisitors as a member of the group. His great-uncle Ottone Visconti became archbishop of Milan and was embroiled in the above-mentioned power struggle with the outgoing della Torre family. In addition, the Cistercian house of Chiaravalle, which protected and promoted Guglielma's relics, was an important establishment in both Milanese society and government. Monks there represented families from all walks of life and importance in the city and were even appointed to important civic posts after the mid 13th century.[62]

The factionalism that divided Milanese governing families throughout the 13th century reached through all segments of urban society. The age that witnessed the birth of the communal governments with their relative democratization of political participation to ever widening social groups, also witnessed the intense rivalry of groups who loosely represented papal interests (Guelfs) or imperial interests (Ghibellines.) These factions were in constant, violent conflict. The della Torre rose to prominence by championing rebellious *popolo* factions of lower orders, although they themselves were wealthy landowners. Their opposition to the rising Visconti family, and Archbishop Ottone in particular, would have been seen by the Milanese as just another volley in the ongoing factionalism that was long a part of life. The papacy was embroiled in these conflicts from the very beginning, and it is not hard to believe the people of Milan saw the pope in Rome as more of a political figure than spiritual leader. This coupled with the fact the Milan always viewed its Ambrosian Church as singularly independent from Rome would have contributed to citizens' dissatisfaction with the Latin Church.[63]

Very few, if any, families of means in Milan were not caught up in the political issues of the day. Politically important familial and social ties may have provided the Guglielmites initial protection from the Inquisition and assistance once the trials were ultimately held. From the list of followers produced during the proceedings we have the names of specific members and can

62 Pincelli, *Churchmen and Urban Government*, 239.

63 Jane Black, *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan: Plenitude of Power Under the Visconti and the Sforza, 1329–1535* (Oxford: 2009); and Dorothy Muir, *A History of Milan Under the Visconti* (London: 1924), 8.

trace their alliance to the Visconti and other prominent Milanese families.[64] Maifreda herself was a cousin of the Milanese leader Matteo Visconti. Surely this provided her with a level of personal protection others may have lacked. Matteo Visconti was repeatedly connected in some tangential way with the Guglielmites, even after they were disbanded. A relative of one of the original Guglielmite followers who travelled to Bohemia after her death, Francesco Garbagnate, was a diplomat for Matteo, travelling to the court of Henry VII in 1309, on a peace mission. When Matteo Visconti was himself charged with heresy (a primarily political move) in the 1320s, he was accused of being associated with the Guglielmites and with Fra Dolcino's heretical group.[65] The tomb of Ottone Visconti and his family is also housed in the abbey of Chiaravalle next the original site of Guglielma's remains.[66]

Though politics effected all Milanese lives, the Guglielmite groups' ties to the Visconti were apparently not based on political affiliation as there were followers from the opposing della Torre family as well. The rift between Guelf and Ghibelline parties in Italian politics which lead to civil war in the city-states throughout northern and central Italy in the high Middle Ages do not seem to have been reflected in differences among the followers of Guglielma. For example, devotees Ottorino, Francesco, and Mirano da Garbagnate were active Ghibellines while Bellacara Carentano and her three daughters were from an illustrious family with ties to the della Torre, who were members of the Guelf party.[67] Part of Guglielma's appeal, and that of other popular religious figures of the age, was the ability to act as mediator or ameliorator of political conflict. It is an interesting aspect of medieval religiosity that women were some of the most successful in this capacity.[68]

The Guglielmites' social standing is one of the main features that sets them apart from other popular religious movements of the age. The followers whose names we know (we may not have complete records of lesser citizens) reflect mainstream Milanese society. They were predominately female but included men, some in the highest positions in the group. Of those followers brought

64 Newman, "Agnes of Prague," 569.

65 Muir, *Milan*, 8.

66 Costa, *Guglielma*, 41.

67 Newman, "Agnes of Prague," 568–9.

68 The clearest example of this influence is the political activism of Catherine of Siena in the latter half of the 14th century. See Sally M. Brasher, "Catherine of Siena: Political Persuasion and Party Leadership of the Intellective Mystic" in Barbara J. Dennison, ed., *Women, Religion and Leadership: Female Saints As Unexpected Leaders* (New York: 2018), 56–78.

to trial, thirty of them came from just seven different families.[69] The Saramita family was very active in the group. Andreas Saramita's sister Meliora and mother Ricadonna and his daughter were active in the group before him.[70] This reflects the fact that families tend to follow similar paths, even if those are heretical, but it also suggests the specific nature of medieval Italian urban society which was so family centered. We can also see how families passed on their devotional alliance to the children in the names given to some of the second-generation members. The frequent use of Paraclete or Felix/Felicia, both of which refer to the Holy Spirit or blessed one, as children's name reflect this allegiance to Guglielma.[71]

Urban Italian family groups were often indistinguishable political, economic, and social units. From the trial we can see that many individual supporters brought before the inquisitors revealed strong familial alliances. However, we also see marital and familial divisions among the group and the records give us a glimpse into the social and personal lives of Milanese citizens. Some wives participated independently of their husbands and vice versa. One Milanese woman, Adelina Crimella for example, was very active in the group to some degree in defiance of her husband. The court punished him for failing to exercise his patriarchal role in the household.[72] As is to be expected, as they have more autonomy than married women, there was a large contingent of unmarried women among the followers. Seventeen were brought before the tribunal, including seven widows and Humiliati sisters of Biassono. And while possibly underreported, the poor were also represented. There is a range of social occupations and status revealed in the list of followers. In addition to noble families there is a physician as well a seamstress and serving maid listed.[73] The seamstress, Taria dei Pontari, was to be designated a cardinal in the new church.[74]

Barbara Newman has argued that the varied social composition of the Guglielmites was not unintentional and reflected a conscious policy of inclusion by Guglielma's followers. This is represented in the core principle of the doctrine that held that Guglielma would return to lead *all* people through the final age of man.[75] This desire for social levelling also reflects one of the central tensions of urban society in the era. The communal ideal of broad civic

69 Costa, *Guglielma*, 121–124.
70 Tocca, "Il processo," 334, 360, 432.
71 Ibid., Newman, *Virile Woman*, 43–44; Caciola, "Guglielmite Trinity," 9.
72 Tocca, "Il processo," 418, 420–27.
73 Ibid.
74 Newman, "Agnes of Prague," 569.
75 Ibid., 569.

participation in the republic was challenging to maintain, particularly with the rise of the strongman and the burgeoning capitalist economy. By the end of the 12th century the income disparity that always challenged egalitarian principles was becoming greater. Groups such as the Humiliati and Guglielmites were actively seeking to extend access to the spiritual economy by stressing inclusiveness and by critiquing the Church and urban institutions that exacerbated this division.[76]

The social/political culture of medieval Milan combined with the demographic density of the city meant that families' ties to factions, political leaders, parish churches and monasteries, or even emerging lay religious and heretical groups, would have been public knowledge and have created networks of alliance, subversion, and intrigue that reached beyond questions of personal faith. The Inquisition itself, was as much a political office as religious. The persecution of individuals and groups was as often initiated for political reasons as religious.

6 Politics of the Church

It is always difficult to separate institutional religion and politics in medieval Italy, but this is particularly true of Milan in the latter half of the 13th century. The unprecedented popular religious fervor was matched by waves of social and political upheaval so that the resulting movements were often indistinguishable from one another. Similarly, religious doctrine was also social doctrine and the Church saw itself as the arbiter of issues of faith but also the overseer of the social and political comportment of all people. Waves of religious unorthodoxy spread through the cities of northern and central Italy at the same time the political hegemony of the Church in Rome was being challenged. The Church did not see these as disparate issues.[77]

The bishopric in any of the Italian city-states was a political office that reflected the localized interests of the landed elites as well as the dictates of an increasingly politicized papacy in Rome. This was nowhere truer than in Milan where the archbishop was a political appointee who acted as mediator between the frequent advances of the Holy Roman emperor to the north, the papacy to the south, and the embattled citizens of the city. The militant della Torre family was still in power in Milan at the time of Guglielma's residence there, but the

76 Brasher, *Women of the Humiliati*. Also, Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London: 1978).

77 Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 87.

strongmen Visconti family were on the rise. The year that Guglielma died, 1262, Ottone Visconti was appointed archbishop of Milan, despite the opposition of the della Torre family. Even the papacy chose sides for purely secular reasons involving the region's politics. The two sides reached an impasse and the della Torres refused Ottone's entrance into the city where he was to be consecrated. In reaction, the intended archbishop placed the city under interdict. The dispute lasted five years before the archbishop was allowed to take his place in office.[78] For the religious residents of the city of Milan this created a crisis that seemed to be part of an increasingly destabilized Church and state.[79] It is at this historical moment that the Guglielmites formulated their new *ecclesia*.

Milan was also involved in the very nasty dispute over the legitimacy of Pope Boniface VIII. The pope had been elected in 1294 while the previous pope was still living. Many challenged the legitimacy of his leadership including the increasingly powerful king of France, Philip IV. In 1303 a group of armed men, including a high ranking official in the French court, stormed the papal palace in Anagni and took to old pope prisoner. He was freed by the incensed local population but died soon after. It was considered a great humiliation to the man and the office, but there has been some debate as to how this event was actually perceived throughout Italy. The general consensus derived a from a close reading of sources from the time, is that reactions reflected the political factions that either supported or resisted Boniface rather than any general affront to the holiness of the office. Since the early Middle Ages, the Church in Milan had followed the Ambrosian Rite that differed somewhat from the approved liturgical rites of the Church in Rome. The archbishops Milan had always favored the Ambrosian Rite which was frequently condemned and threatened with suppression by various popes. This had the effect of elevating their claims of independence from Rome to some degree.[80] Thus the politics of these events would have been familiar to the Milanese. The papacy continuously complained of the general lack of reverence and adherence of the population of Milan, and even of their own clergy there. Innocent III claimed

78 It is from this moment in 1262 that we can see the appointment of monks from the Cistercian Abbey of Chiaravalle as supervisors of the city's treasury, an office held by monks from this establishment for the following 40 years. Pincelli argues that they were originally given this position during the conflict between the della Torre and he archbishop because they had remained neutral during this conflict. Pincelli, "Churchmen and Urban Government," 239, 246.

79 Wessley, "Thirteenth Century Guglielmites," 296.

80 O. Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125–1325*, (University Park, PA: 2005), 250.

that in Milan, "anything that can be shown to disagree with the catholic faith is accepted as religion."[81]

The Humiliati of Milan became embroiled in the jurisdictional disputes between the papacy and the archbishop. On several occasions over the course of the 13th century, the pope and the archbishop fought over who had jurisdiction over the order. The Humiliati often fought for privileges of exemption from certain communal fees and duties, and they frequently used or (were used by) factions from Rome and the bishop's palace in disputes. For example, in 1258 the pope ordered the Humiliati of Milan to follow the Roman liturgy, suggesting they were following the bishop's preferred Ambrosian rites. In 1263, the order was brought to the attention of the papacy when they were reprimanded for refusing to pay Archbishop Ottone due to opposition from the della Torre. The political swings between papacy and the various archbishops must have been challenging to navigate. The latter conflict also illustrates the economic might of the Humiliati.[82] The Humiliati and all citizens of Milan became quite capable of throwing their economic weight around to influence all political parties.

In addition to the political conflicts involving the Church in Rome and the archbishop of Milan, religious citizens had to contend with an omnipresent and very active office of Dominican inquisitors who were intent on not only wiping out heresy but also controlling religious practice in a city that was under interdict from Rome.[83] In the Wild West that was the urban society of Milan in the late 13th century, the Dominicans saw themselves as moral sheriffs attempting to uphold the law in anarchic times. They were dedicated to stopping the spread of novel or dangerous heretical streams before they could become a river. In the case of the trial of the Guglielmites they operated independently without any evidence of episcopal collaboration or oversight. As the bishops were supposed to finance inquisitorial trials one must speculate that the fines imposed on those Guglielmites found guilty were needed to pay for the whole trial.[84]

81 Trevor Dean, *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* (Manchester: 2000), 69.

82 Gabriele Archetti, "Gli Umilitati e i vescovi alla fine del duecento," in Alberzoni, et al., *Sulle Tracce*, 267–71.

83 Newman, "Agnes of Prague," 573.

84 Elliott, *Proving Women*, 123.

7 Women's Political Influence

While predominaantly closed out of the public sphere of Italian urban politics, women's presence and indirect influence and agency can be ascertained through the actions of a few exceptional women and the presence of groups of feminized religious such as the Humiliati and the Guglielmites. As stated before, politics in Milan in the 13th and 14th centuries centered around the family. When talking about Milanese political regimes one talks of the della Torre, Visconti, and Sforza families as much as any individual member. Women outnumbered men in the cities three to two and were engaged behind the scenes in the myriad activities of the family business as well as the critical sociopolitical role of conducting marriage diplomacy.[85] Guglielma's apparent or real genteel origins would have made her an attractive and recognizable ally in the close-knit community of urban elite women. Maifreda's familial tie to the up-and-coming leader Matteo Visconti would not only have allowed her some freedoms and protection from prosecution, but she would have also been allowed into the inner circle of ranks of political wives, sisters, and mothers.

The political intrigue in the private sphere of influential Italian families mirrored the work of the men in the public sphere. Women were used as political marriage pawns by the fighting factions in the medieval city, but their role as mothers and sisters in brokering these crucial alliances should not be overlooked. Marriage could elevate an individual's social standing and political title. The Visconti would ultimately be toppled when the last in the line, Filippo Maria Visconti failed to produce a male heir. His daughter married Francesco Sforza whose family became the next line of strongmen rulers.

Women wielded unofficial influence through religious activity as well. In the 1370s, Catherine of Siena recognized the indirect influence of women (beyond that of her own) when she wrote to both Milanese despot Bernabò Visconti and his wife Regina della Scala, appealing to both to support the return of the pope from Avignon to Rome, and her letters to each reflect their gendered spheres, but she also appeals to Regina's ability to influence her husband. Catherine encourages her to guide her husband's affairs stating, "I am certain

85 For a discussion on the role of marriage and marriage diplomacy in Medieval and Renaissance Italy, see Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family, and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: 1994). On Family as political/social units see David Herlihy, "Family Solidarity in Medieval Italian History," in *Economy, Society and Government in Medieval Italy; Essays in Honor of Robert L. Reynolds*, eds., David Herlihy, Robert S. Lopez, and Vsevolod Slessarev (Kent OH: 1969), 173–84.

that if charity is strong in you, your husband cannot fail to feel its warmth." To Bernabò, she talks of his honor and will, hoping to shame him into submission.[86] Guglielma and Maifreda may not have gained the authority or renown that Catherine would, but one can certainly see how they could have moved among the powerful and influential wives, sisters, and daughters of Milan gaining their devotion and following their leadership. Pious women gained the respect of men and women. Guglielma's efforts as a revered holy woman to give advice included political advice, advice taken by men and women.

The instability and insecurity of the age led to the apocalyptic and millennialist ideas of a wide variety or religious faithful who felt traditional institutions had let them down. The end of the world did seem nigh, and the only question was how it would be met. The Guglielmites sought a leader who could transcend the endless political trials that plagued their life. The patriarchal institutions of state and Church were failing. They placed their faith in a new Church led by a woman, which would guide them through the last age. While gender may not have been a determining factor in their doctrine or membership of their followers, the idea that women had influence politically and religiously had precedent and the Guglielmites felt it was time to place their trust there.

8 Conclusion

Guglielma and her followers have been largely ignored in the history of northern Italy, the medieval Church, and popular religious groups. The Guglielmites have suffered from a dual stigma. While active, they were condemned as heretics, and the leaders and some followers marginalized as women. After their suppression in the 14th century their memory was mostly expunged outside the biased inquisitorial records. The few times they were mentioned in popular writings of the late 14th and mid-15th centuries, they were not only condemned as heretics, but charges of debauchery and immorality were baselessly added to descriptions of their heretical activities. Gabrio de Zamorei of Parmo in his *Sermo de Fide*, written between 1371 and 1375, accused Guglielma of drawing women into a cult of sexual debauchery. This image was revived by Bernardinus Corio and Johannes Trightemius writing in the mid-15th century. These authors constructed a provocative narrative of Guglielma leading women into an underground cavern where they were encouraged to have

86 Brasher, "Catherine of Siena", 68, 69.

sex with whomever they wished. The story included a cuckolded husband, Conradus Coppa, exposing their activities to their husbands at an elaborate banquet. As if this were not titillating enough, Trithemius claimed the women were initiated into the group by drinking wine that was mixed with the dust of murdered infants born of these immoral unions.[87] These tales have no basis in any record of the activities of Guglielma or her followers and were probably constructed on rumor and innuendo that surely originated from the group's accuser, the Church. The stories speak more of the efforts of the Church to discourage the evangelical excesses of the age of popular piety and the public's love of scandal. Groups banned as heretics in the high and late Middle Ages were routinely vilified for daring to interpret doctrine or preach independently. The authority of the medieval Church depended on the close adherence to doctrine and respect for official institutions of devotion and worship. The era known as the 'age of faith' witnessed increased frustration by a large segment of the population with the overly temporal, patriarchal Church.

Since its inception, Christianity always attracted women as among its most passionate adherents and welcomed women's participation as long as the Church could contain and control that participation. The increase in female religiosity in the high Middle Ages reflects not only the continuation of traditions of female pious activity but groups like the Guglielmites reflect men and women's frustration with the failings of the traditional, patriarchal Church. The recurrent attraction of the possibility of a feminine divine reemerges throughout history at times when the patriarchal powers that be are deemed corrupt, oppressive, or unresponsive. The idea that a godly woman or woman god would correct the ills facing mankind appears in popular culture repeatedly throughout the ages. The Guglielmites reflect the aspirations of a frustrated religious populace in the chaotic urban environment of late-13th and early 14th-century Milan.

An apocalyptic and millennialist current swept through all of Europe in the high Middle Ages but seems particularly pronounced in burgeoning urban areas of northern Italy. At the intersection of rising capitalist economic inequality, the breakdown of communal republican ideals, and the perception of a politicized Church unconcerned with the souls of its congregants, citizens of the Italian city-states sought ways to create their own spiritual identities and communities. When a holy person like Guglielma appeared in their midst, living the spiritual life they aspired too, they elevated her to status of *vivens sanctus*. The passionate popular religiosity of the era, along with the increased

87 Wessley, "Thirteenth Century Guglielmites", 290.

ability participate in the textual exchange of ideas, meant that these Milanese citizens would have been aware of the ideas of Joachim of Fiore, Fra Dolcino, and others.

Joachim's theology, which the Guglielmites embraced, did not advocate for any extremist reaction, nor was it inherently heretical. Joachim reiterated the orthodoxy of the Holy Trinity, and importance of Old and New Testament authority, and centrality of God and Christ, in his trinitarian evolution of history. His apocalyptic preoccupation placed his world at the cusp of the third age of man, that of the Holy Spirit. He always professed his loyalty to the Church and its doctrine and saw his theology as simply laying out the process of the coming age. He, and followers of his teachings, could be accused of applying excessive import to the last age, which had the potential of challenging orthodoxy by diminishing the importance of Christ, but it is hard to argue any heretical intentionality.

The Guglielmite doctrine did not challenge any tenets of the faith or propose any radical departure from traditional worship or devotions, except that these would be led by women, and of course, that the Holy Spirit would be feminine. Newman and others have argued, gender superiority was not their central ideal behind the novel *ecclesia*. Guglielma and Maifreda were spiritually superior beings, who happened to be women. However, it is possible to see a general appreciation, or at least hope, that perhaps this church and this world would be better served, this time, by women.

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CHAPTER 5

Apocalypticism in the Age of Wyclif

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In the late 14th century in England, a wide range of natural phenomena and social matters were understood through Christian apocalyptic lenses. And the natural and social were often connected. Special social and spiritual meaning was seen by many in the emergence and re-emergence of plague[1] as well as in an earthquake coinciding with the 1382 synod condemning some teachings of the late scholastic thinker John Wyclif (ca. 1328[2]–1384).[3] During Wyclif's working life and in the period thereafter, the instability of Richard II's reign as well as the instability found within different institutions of the Church (including the papacy through the schism of 1378–1417) contributed to this sense of an exceptional and troubling age as well.[4] And apocalyptic thinking often begets more apocalyptic thinking. The very real effects of apocalyptic rhetoric were apparent in Wyclif's day and in the decades thereafter: data from social and natural worlds, as they were used in explanatory or predictive ways together with Judeo-Christian scripture, ended up affecting the church, government, and other domains, in addition to shifting the grounds of how theology was produced.[5] Beyond this, the broad spread of apocalyptic thinking

1 Often overlooked in scholarship on decades following the initial wave of the Black Death, effects of plague on late medieval English culture have been observed in David Coley's *Death and the Pearl Maiden* (Columbus, Ohio: 2019).

2 His birth is placed by many in the 1320s, with Stephen Lahey among those who give 1328 in his *John Wyclif* (Oxford: 2009), 4; Andrew Larsen, in spite of the title, suggests "he is more likely to have been born around 1335 than 1330", in "John Wyclif, c. 1331–1384," in *A Companion to John Wyclif: Late Medieval Theologian*, ed. Ian C. Levy (Leiden: 2006), 11.

3 See Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge, Eng.: 2008), 3–20, as well as May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century: 1307–1399* (Oxford History of England 5), (Oxford: 1963), 514.

4 A broad narrative aligning Ricardian poetry with "a culturally significant moment in the English appropriation of the Apocalypse" culminating with Thomas Wimbledon's 1388 sermon seeing divine judgment as imminent is presented by Penn Szittya in "Domesday Bokes," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: 1992), 383. The sermon from 1388 is discussed further below; Ione Kemp Knight, ed., *Wimbledon's Sermon: Redde rationem villicationis tue* (Pittsburgh: 1967).

5 The intersection of the theological and political is drawn out in Anne Hudson's schema for "The Ideology of Reformation" in Chapters 6 (theology), 7 (ecclesiology), and 8 (politics) of *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford: 1988), 278–389.

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has been argued as substantial if not central to the literary landmarks of late 14th-century England.[6] As will be made clearer throughout this study, England in Wyclif's time was awash in apocalyptic thinking that persisted for generations, some of which bore references to Wyclif or *auctores* or was fine-tuned consciously while other currents became mixed in ways that are difficult to sort out today.

Equally puzzling is the figure of Wyclif himself. As Stephen Lahey maintains, "It is not easy to connect this vituperative critic of the papacy, the friars, and the 14th-century ecclesiastical status quo with the abstractions of scholasticism."[7] Scholarship has tried to sort out theological and political dimensions of Wyclif's thinking,[8] and scholars continue to work through the ways in which Wyclif – sometimes in spite of his best efforts to control effects of his work – became a name to rally around or provided ideas footnoted in subsequent generations. Wyclif was also interested in ways of shifting authority to the scriptural text that sought to undercut many traditional positions of consequence – those that promote respect for authority and for property. In one view, one of Wyclif's greatest contributions is in modeling the power of reading and interpretation for others at a time when the English population was becoming increasingly literate.[9] Other developments in his thinking might be understood to stem from interpersonal conflict he had encountered

6 Just a few of the contributions to the study of late medieval apocalypticism in English literary studies are Morton Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick: 1962); Robert Adams, "The Nature of Need in *Piers Plowman* XX," *Traditio* 34 (1978), 273–301; Russell A. Peck, "John Gower and the Book of Daniel", in *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: 1989), 159–87; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, Eng.: 1990); Robert J. Blanch and Julian N. Wasserman, *From Pearl to Gawain: Forme to Fynisment* (Gainesville: 1995); Claudia Ratazzi Papka, "The Limits of Apocalypse," in Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, ed., *Last Things: The Limits of the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: 2000), 233–56; Eileen S. Jankowski, "Chaucer's 'Second Nun's Tale' and the Apocalyptic Imagination," *Chaucer Review* 36 (2001), 128–48; Elliot Kendall, "Saving History," in Elisabeth Dutton, ed., *John Gower: Trilingual Poet* (Woodbridge: 2010), 46–58; David Aers, *Beyond Reformation?: An Essay on William Langland's Piers Plowman and the End of Constantinian Christianity* (Notre Dame: 2015); Deirdre Riley, "Retraction and Re-Collection," *Mediaevalia* 36/37 (2015/16), 263–290; and Justin M. Byron-Davies, *Revelation and the Apocalypse in Late Medieval Literature* (Cardiff: 2020).

7 Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford: 2009), 3.

8 Kantik Ghosh points to Oxford's reputation for "daring interdisciplinarity" prior to the early 15th-century constraints imposed by the Church. "Wyclif, Arundel, and the Long Fifteenth Century" in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: 2011), 559.

9 For James Simpson, "Wyclif's hermeneutics did away with conciliar tradition. And so a treatise on Scripture also turns to the explosive subjects of ecclesiastical property not sanctioned by Scripture. That institutions stand or fall by modes of reading is implicit in the range of

at Oxford. Wyclif experienced conflicts with Franciscans at Oxford on a number of issues, and he echoed earlier criticisms of fraternal orders.[10] A number of polemicists in late medieval Europe had seen one or more of the orders of friars as seemingly detached from their professed ethic. It is significant that Wyclif was trying to create a space in which everyone – including the laity – had claims to the status and spiritual vitality traditionally assumed of religious orders. By some measures in some places, he seems to have succeeded.[11]

Wyclif's ideas spread beyond England as well. Although survivals into Hussite Bohemia and Reformation Germany[12] are beyond the scope of this study, this study focusing primarily on sources originating in England considers varieties of apocalyptic meaning extending beyond his life to harsh pronouncements by the church in subsequent decades. This age – which would be defined differently by different individuals studying the period – is not limited by Wyclif's lifetime but accounts for his influence, reactions against him, and parallel thinking found in late medieval England. The main focus will be on the period from the 1370s through the early part of the next century,[13]

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topics covered by the *De veritate sacrae scripturae*. Possession of the text determines control of material possession." *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: 2004), 474.

10 A sustained study of antifraternalism in England is Penn Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition in English Literature* (Princeton: 1986). More recent studies considering from different angles controversies regarding friars include those in *Defenders and Critics of Franciscan Life: Essays in Honor of John V. Fleming*, ed. Michael F. Cusato and G. Geltner (Leiden: 2009); Ian Levy, "Wycliffites, Franciscan Poverty, and the Apocalypse," *Franciscan Studies* 73 (2015), 295–316; and Sean Otto, "Anti-Fraternalism and the Sources of Wyclif's *Sermones*," in Luigi Campi and Stefano Simonetta, ed., *Before and after Wyclif: Sources and Textual Influences* (Basel: 2020), 153–65.

11 According to Maureen Jurkowski, "many of the places where the early disciples preached would become Lollard strongholds for a century or more." "Lollard Networks," in Mishtooni Bose and J. Patrick Hornbeck II, ed., *Wycliffite Controversies* (Turnhout: 2011), 262.

12 For the revision of the England-to-Bohemia narrative owing to John Foxe's 16th-century *Acts and Monuments*, see Michael Van Dussen's *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Eng.: 2012), 16–18. A more recent and broader consideration of Lollards' "appropriation by early evangelicals" including Foxe is in Susan Royal, *Lollards in the English Reformation* (Manchester: 2020), 21. With an eye toward works that survived into Hussite Bohemia, Pavlína Cermanová cites as influential English apocalyptic texts in Bohemia the *Opus arduum valde* (discussed below) and the dissenting priest Richard Wyche's communication with Hus in the early 15th century. "Constructing the Apocalypse," in Hornbeck and Van Dussen's *Europe after Wyclif*, ed. Michael Van Dussen and J. Patrick Hornbeck II (New York: 2016), 68.

13 Apocalyptically tinged material falls within this period, but Rex's sweeping claim requires qualification: "By 1430, the expansive phase of Lollardy was well and truly over. This is as plain in intellectual as well as social terms." *The Lollards* (New York: 2002), 88. One example of a Lollard specialist's pushback to Rex is Maureen Jurkowski's review of Rex's

a moment of important developments in and restraints to vernacular theology in England.[14]

Observations grounded in apocalyptic thinking became popularized at the same time they seemed special based on the vantage point of late-medieval England. Two points about the apocalyptic recently highlighted by Shannon Gayk might be considered with the apocalypticism that emerged in Wyclif's age.[15] First, widely visible signs of the end put every person – even those with limited access to written language – in a position to recognize something meaningful. Second, key aspects of this meaning are hidden,[16] perhaps through ignorance of there being anything significant to see or read, perhaps through misinterpretation. John's Apocalypse can be seen to embody this in that its name literally suggests revealing but is also often referred to as the book of *Privetes*[17] in late medieval England.[18] References to the End drawn from vivid Hebrew prophecy and from elsewhere in the canon proved meaningful in England in the Middle Ages,[19] too, though most powerfully in an age where there was social unrest, contested claims to royal and papal power, and charges of false teaching being leveled from different directions. However, there arose a population of economically empowered laypersons and ascendant

work, in which Jurkowski appeals to a broader field of data (*Catholic Historical Review* 91 [2005], 155).

14 For David Lavinsky, from "roughly 1380 to 1420, vernacular theology arguably reinforced the political and ecclesiological views that made the movement suspect in the eyes of authorities, such as Wyclif's anti-sacerdotalism and his understanding of *dominion*." *The Material Text in Wycliffite Biblical Scholarship* (Woodbridge: 2017), 243. Note that while Penn (above) and Lavinsky use the English *dominion*, scholars including Lahey in *John Wyclif* (cited below) prefer the Latin *dominium* in discussing Wyclif's teaching.

15 "Apocalyptic Ecologies," *Speculum* 96 (2021), 1–37.

16 "[O]bservation and comprehension are not always coincident; … there may be a fundamental fissure between imagination and understanding; but also that imagination itself may be the best tool we have in preparing for a future that is fundamentally unknowable and unrepresentable." Gayk, "Apocalyptic Ecologies," 6.

17 Eleanor Baker notes that "privete in this sense referring specifically to sacred mysteries and divine secrets." "Metaphors of Textual Materiality in Late Medieval Middle English Sermons," *Studies in Philology* 118 (2021), 639. Spelled *Priveytes* in the Middle English sermon by Wimbledon, ed. Knight, 122.

18 Baker suggests: "Books appear so frequently in the Book of Revelation precisely because they are objects which reveal as well as conceal," 639.

19 As Szittya observes in a brief but wide-ranging survey of the apocalyptic in the English literary tradition, the apocalyptic significance assigned to so many events affecting medieval England ended up being drawn from Christian canonical texts other than John's Apocalypse, such as the Olivet Discourse or "Little Apocalypse" of Matthew 24–25, which is notable for Jesus' direct mentions of natural signs to look for at the ending of the age. "Domesday Bokes," 394–95.

readers – those who were willing to take a stab at interpreting signs of an end and who, even when their narrative failed, could accommodate a revised narrative as they lived in uncertainty and the in-between.

This study proceeds with an acknowledgement that, just as identifying terms such as *Lollard* meant different things from different angles and at different points in the late Middle Ages, so are scholarly judgments about such identities subject to revision and debate. For an appreciation of the variety of thinking that is at least tangential to Wyclif, apocalypticism in Wyclif's age will be considered in different ways, including through Wyclif's personal vantage point but also through three larger issues: what forms of apocalyptic teaching are considered safe or suspect; how labeling and collective identity help give the apocalyptic some of its shape; and how the power of reading and writing – even as they are thought to represent stability and claims to tradition – might contribute to instability, divergence of thought, and change.

1 Wyclif: Seer and Seen

One important narrative of Wyclif's life emphasizes his role as *doctor* and exegete. Wyclif, highly trained in theology, becoming fairly confident as a public intellectual,[20] and showing upward mobility, produced biblical commentary that was has been seen as a part of a reinvigoration of biblical studies at Oxford.[21] His body of work might have been remembered for his achievement in commenting on the entire canon,[22] had his work not coincided with

20 With a nod to R.N. Swanson's *University, Academics, and the Great Schism* (Cambridge, Eng.: 1979), Ghosh notes in Wyclif's day "academics' sense of their own professional prerogatives as public intellectuals." "Wyclif, Arundel, and the Long Fifteenth Century" in *After Arundel*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: 2011), 561.

21 This has been measured to some extent by the paucity of original commentaries produced since the time of the influential Franciscan exegete Nicholas of Lyre (*c.*1270–1349), though Andrew Kraebel suggests as a factor "the seeming definitiveness of Lyre's commentaries, so thoroughly successful that, forty years later, exegetes could only see themselves as supplementing this now-standard work." *Biblical Commentary and Translation in Later Medieval England*, (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature) 109, (Cambridge, Eng.: 2020), 90; a parallel argument is made by Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Middle English Bible: A Reassessment* (Philadelphia: 2016), 34–35. This devaluation of Wyclif's exegesis is in contrast to Stephen Lahey, for whom the *Postilla* "guarantees him a place among the great medieval commentators." "Introduction," in John Wyclif, *Trialogus*, trans. Lahey (Cambridge, Eng.: 2012), 9.

22 Jeremy I. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford, 1356–1430." *The History of* the *University* of *Oxford*, vol. 2, ed. J.I. Catto and T.A.R. Evans (Oxford: 1992): 175–261, 196. On the possible logistics of what survives as his *Postilla super totam Bibliam*, see Beryl Smalley, "John

a period of heightened ecclesiastical conflict and had his method of exegesis not put him in stark contrast with the Franciscan William Woodford.[23] Even as Wyclif's commentaries were sometimes maligned, his belief in careful study of the canonical texts and his belief in their higher truth modeled literate activity that others could use when they perceived persecution.

Wyclif showed willingness to serve as an authority favorable to royal interests when the Crown and papacy were in conflict, and in the 1370s several years of intermittent service to the Crown have been noted. One conspicuous activity was when he served, as J.A.F. Thomson explained, as "a member of an embassy sent to negotiate with Pope Gregory XI at Bruges in 1374 on various matters connected with royal and papal rights over the clergy,"[24] with little accomplished by the effort.[25] Wyclif emphasized the high responsibility that those in power had to the church, particularly a pope or king.[26] Still, it is significant that he maintained a good relationship with the British royal family as he took theological risks in his teaching, preaching and writing.[27] In any event, his position at Oxford put him on a stage where his work would receive condemnation by Pope Gregory XI in May 1377, bringing the university under intense

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Wyclif's *Postilla super totam Bibliam*," *Bodleian Library Record* 4 (1953), 186–205, 187. Some doubt was cast on the whole project by Pamela Gradon, "Wyclif's Postilla and His Sermons," in Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchinson, ed., *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale* (Turnhout: 2005), 68.

23 Catto encapsulates the conflict: "Whereas Wyclif sought to elicit the hidden significance of the text, Woodford used it as a prompt for posing moral questions. …" "Wyclif and Wycliffism," 197.

24 Thomson, *The Transformation of Medieval England, 1370–1529* (Foundations of Modern Britain), (London: 1983), 356. More is sketched out by Larsen, "John Wyclif," 15–18. As Lahey explains, "by November 1372, Wyclif had entered into the service of John of Gaunt," King Richard II's uncle, who was precluded from ascending to the throne. *John Wyclif*, 15.

25 Otto, 154.

26 L.J. Daly, situating Wyclif's thinking on war in *De potestate pape*, points to the obligations that those in power have to charity and the church "… nam nec eciam dominus Ihesus habet potestatem ad dampnificandum, sed meliorandum ecclesiam" (137 n. 10, citing *De potestate pape*, xii, 377), translation of which follows Daly's: "… for neither Peter nor Paul nor [Lord Jesus] has power to injure, but only to better, the *ecclesia*." *The Political Theory of John Wyclif* (Chicago: 1962), 137.

27 As Levy maintains, "Wyclif's relentless criticism of the ecclesiastical hierarchy had left him remarkably unscathed through the 1370s, largely due to the support he received from the English Crown." *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Ind.: 2012), 78. For sketches of Archbishop Simon Sudbury's 1377 and 1378 attempts in London to put Wyclif on trial, provided in the context of various cases of academic condemnation related to Oxford, see Larsen's appendix to *The School of Heretics* (Leiden: 2011), 297–98. On Wyclif's troubles in 1377 and 1378, see, too, Edwin D. Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing* (Cambridge, Eng.: 2010), 86–88.

scrutiny.[28] His most vociferous attacks of the papacy as an institution, seen as a turning point in the history of Antichrist rhetoric, are traced to this late period in Wyclif's career.[29] More broadly, his allegations of ecclesiastical corruption raised throughout his life seem to have been sincerely held. Although a narrative (advanced forcefully by his posthumous critic the Carmelite Thomas Netter, discussed below) of Wyclif being more interested in his upward mobility and being named a bishop than in teaching and service, that does not seem to be the case.[30] Wyclif felt that there was sound theological grounding for his arguments for limiting the power of the pope, creating space for secular powers. This thinking would have parallels elsewhere. As Ian Christopher Levy notes, "One of the most essential and persistent elements of the Wycliffite and Hussite reform programs was the claim that papal power – in the form of jurisdictional prerogatives, dispensations, and penalties – now far exceeded the rightful mandate granted to the Petrine office as conceived by biblical and patristic sources."[31] In ways too complicated to sketch here, Wyclif found subtler ways of configuring power within the Church where fraternal correction became a mechanism that kept the Church in check while the Church itself was bound to practice fraternal counsel as a step before excommunicating or severely disadvantaging its members.[32]

To argue over power of which many were suspicious, raises one set of reactions, but to challenge regularly conspicuous religious practice raises another. For example, Wyclif's criticism of the handling of the sacramental system opened him up to criticism. In Wyclif's *Trialogus*[33] voices call into question confirmation as a sacrament, even though the work also accounts for qualified acceptance of it.[34] His thinking on holy orders was substantially developed by his followers to emphasize the priesthood of everyone, and this line of thinking became one of the more central beliefs of Wycliffism, if it is to have a center. The Eucharist – so powerfully understood as a site of Christ's

28 Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism," 204–5.

29 Bernard McGinn, acknowledging that Wyclif was not alone in aligning the papacy with the theology about an Antichrist, sees as crucial Wyclif's "sharp distinction between the invisible church of the saved and the visible church of the present." *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: 2000), 181. Lahey notes Wyclif's growing pessimism toward the papacy late in life, although some hint of appreciation for the institution might be tracked as late as 1379. *John Wyclif*, 196–97.

30 Otto, 154.

31 *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages*, 233.

32 See Craun, *Ethics and Power*, ch. 5.

33 *Trialogus* 4.14 and 4.15 (or, within Lahey's translation [Cambridge, Eng.: 2013], 232–37).

34 Penn, "Wyclif and the Sacraments," in Levy, ed., *A Companion to John Wyclif*, 275–76.

presence for medieval Christians – proved the most problematic sacrament for Wyclif to challenge and had the deepest implications for scandalizing Wyclif and his followers. Wyclif's unwillingness to accede to the Church's teaching on the Eucharist in particular made various attempts to construe Wyclif's work as heretical easier.

But his position and authority were not taken away overnight. Stephen Penn's narrative focusing on sacramental teaching accounts for much of the social capital that slipped away from Wyclif in his later years:

> Wyclif's opinions on the Eucharist were published in the last four years of his life, when the outspoken and occasionally troublesome scholar made the spectacular transition to the life of the secluded heresiarch.[35] The university had been a safe environment in which to bring forth his theses on dominion, on clerical property, and on the power of the pope. His pronouncements on Holy Orders and Penance, if they were received with hostility by the Church, had not led to formal condemnation (and clearly attracted influential adherents). The university had defended him against the charges laid at his feet by Pope Gregory XI in 1377, and had refused to condemn him as a heretic. But when he began to question the doctrine of transubstantiation, as defined by medieval canon law (in the *Firmiter* decree[36] and the *Cum marthae* epistle of Pope Innocent III[37]), and to problematize the theology of Real Presence in public lectures, the Chancellor of Oxford University, William Barton, had little options but to instigate proceedings against the teaching of his ideas.[38]

The timing of the formal accusation against Wyclif, based off of Wyclif's 10 May 1381 response, may have been as early as March.[39] Wyclif's articles on the Eucharist were condemned at Oxford seemingly by a narrow margin,[40] while

35 Lahey's account, contextualizing Wyclif's thinking in terms of social upheaval referenced below, complements Penn's narrative: "In the last five years of his life, amidst the confusion of rebellion and repeated attacks by the rapidly growing number of his opponents, he wrote voluminously." "Introduction" to Wyclif's *Trialogus*, ed. and trans. Lahey (Cambridge, Eng.: 2013), 9.

36 Emerging from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

37 Innocent III's 1202 letter explaining fine points of the sacrament to the Archbishop of Lyons.

38 Penn, "Wyclif and the Sacraments," 249–50.

39 Larsen states that it would have been "mid-April at the very latest" but notes a range of scholarly disagreement on dating. *School of Heretics*, 150.

40 Ibid., 160.

Wyclif failed to get the Crown, in spite of Wyclif's earlier support, to protect him from punishment, although the Crown would not interfere.[41] This social view does not account for the urgency Wyclif would have felt, mirroring that which is communicated in the earliest generations of Christianity. In Michael Wilks's reading of Wyclif's life, his appeals to secular power had a figural connection to St. Paul's urgent missionary activity as well as to the saint's appeals to Caesar.[42] Also, Wyclif agreed to his politically troubled friend John of Gaunt not to comment widely on the sacrament, a promise Wyclif did not keep.[43] Overall, Wyclif appeared committed to the proclamation of what he saw as truth, and teaching what he held to be true remained as essential as ever.

Later that same year, another adversary of his, William Courtenay, became archbishop of Canterbury after the previous archbishop, Simon Sudbury, Wyclif's earlier adversary, was murdered in the Peasants' Revolt that some would come to align with Wyclif.[44] Wyclif disclaimed the violence while still not talking of the archbishop in kind terms. In Michael Wilks's view, "Wyclif condemned the Peasants' Revolt because, although it tried, it *failed* to be a revolution from above."[45] As difficult as the unrest made things for Wyclif, the following year was also crucial to the shape Wycliffism would take, with the Earthquake Council in London formally condemning Wyclif's teachings under the authority of the archbishop, and then the placement of Robert Rigg as a chancellor of Oxford to replace Barton, Rigg "showing considerable sympathy to Wyclif's supporters."[46] Following the council, Wyclif would spend the rest of his days at Lutterworth. He may very well have worked closely with dedicated followers in his last years,[47] and he communicated actively; in any event, he was physically disconnected from the center of theological learning at Oxford. Still, he remained aware of matters of Church and politics, notably voicing opposition as secular and ecclesiastical powers were mixed up in

41 Ibid., 163.

42 "Wyclif and the Great Persecution," in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxford: 2000), 179–203, 201. Originally published in *Studies in Church History, Subsidia* 10 (1994), 39–63.

43 Larsen, *School of Heretics*, 163.

44 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 166–67.

45 Wilks points to *De blasphemia* 5 (76) and 13 (194) in "Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movements," *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxford: 2000), 127. Originally published in *Studies in Church History* 9 (1972), 109–30.

46 Larsen, *The School of Heretics*, 164. More is considered of Rigg's relation to Wycliffism in Wendy Scase, "Heu! quanta desolatio Angliae praestatur," in Fiona Somerset, Jill Havens, and Derrick Pitard, ed., *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: 2003), 19–36.

47 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 167.

Bishop of Norwich Henry le Despenser's Crusade to Ghent in 1383 to attack supporters of antipope Clement VII.[48]

He did not die a martyr and was given a Christian burial after his 31 December 1384 death, but he was dug up from his burial place in consecrated ground in 1428, his body desecrated by burning, his ashes put into the River Swift. Somehow his last days of life were not as bad as those of many others who challenged Church teachings (including Jan Hus in Bohemia, burned as a heretic at Konstanz in 1415), while hatred of him continued to grow well after his death. A host of intervening conflicts between those identifying with Wyclif or as Lollards and the Church or the Crown caused problems in England in those intervening years, not the least of which was Richard II's ceding of the Crown to Henry IV in 1399. A period of increased scrutiny for religious dissent was also signaled by Parliament's issuing of the law *De heretico comburendo*, "concerning the heretic to be burned," in 1401, with a Lollard being burned at the stake that same year. Equally important was that the Church was finally able to heal the papal schism that had erupted in Wyclif's later life. Martin V, the pope whose selection in 1417 unified the factions, was in the 1420s presented the case by Thomas Netter that the heresies of Wyclif – who was long dead – were a threat to Europe, not containable in England.[49] Netter had gone after Wycliffite and Hussite heresy for a solid decade by that point.

So in a sense Wyclif's words were no safer than his body. Wyclif the debater was taken down most forcefully *post mortem*. Netter's expansive view of England and Bohemia delivered a heavy blow to religious dissent via his powerful text the *Doctrinale* (purportedly with broader applications to contemporary doctrine but keenly focused on what he saw as Wyclif's legacy), but shifting ideas of what texts could represent had contributed to the unrest of the previous decades. The English Peasants' Revolt, the Wat Tyler-John Ball rebellion of summer 1381, made matters dicey for the Crown and de-stabilized ecclesiastical power, making immediate social stability essential for both institutions. In the following year, the Blackfriars council contributed to antipathy against Wyclif but also to Wycliffism's reification and spread.[50] The dynamics

48 In short, Flanders was generally aligned with France, which was loyal to Clement, who was based in Avignon; meanwhile the English (at war with France at the time and encountering conflicts with trade) supported Urban VI, based in Rome.

49 J. Patrick Hornbeck and Michael Van Dussen, "Introduction," *Europe after Wyclif* (New York: 2017), 1–4; Levy, "A Contextualized Wyclif," in *Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. Bose and Hornbeck (Turnhout: 2011), 55. For a sketch of Netter's work see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 50–55.

50 Cole emphasizes the council's initial exaggeration of the spread of Wycliffism, leading to displacement of persons and the spread of teachings outside the university, then with

of vernacular theology can begin to explain the power and the currency of ideas traditionally rooted in academic circles spreading rapidly and exciting fears in the established church.[51] The translation of the Bible and theological works is found throughout the English tradition, and it only became most problematic with the 1409 *Constitutions* of Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel, which took any nuance out of the Oxford translation debate that had developed since 1401. Nicholas Watson has identified the Oxford debate's central questions as "the nature and capacity of English; the nature and capacity of the (mostly but not exclusively lay) readership of vernacular theology, the definition of truths that are necessary to know; and the role of the clergy as communicators or, alternatively, guardians of knowledge."[52] All of these issues at least touched on by Wyclif in his expansive work affected the forms that religious practice could take publicly and how acceptable teaching was defined.

2 Safe Apocalypticism

Through many periods of the history of Christianity, people have sought safety in the Church knowing that the Last Days were approaching. People were thus taught to be vigilant, with the resources of the Church representing their greatest chance of safety from evils generally outside it. However, speculative exegesis and prophecy (from Franciscan sources in the previous couple of centuries in particular) had projected special eschatological events such as the fall of Antichrist (accompanied by famine and plague) and a period of refreshment

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the backfilling of staff resulting in new proponents of some Wyclif's ideas. *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*, 19.

51 In Vincent Gillespie's view, this was necessitated by a discursive contagion of sorts: "In 1382, vernacular theology moved firmly onto the public intellectual agenda of the English Church with the Blackfriars council, an attempt to address the problems arising from the breakout of academic (and therefore Latinate) Wycliffism into wider clerical circulation and into vernacular Lollardy." "Vernacular Theology," in Paul Strohm, ed., *Middle English* (Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature) (Oxford: 2007), 409.

52 "Censorship and Cultural Change: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409", *Speculum* 70 (1995), 846. Clifford Davidson has recently argued that the Constitutions were not so culturally and theologically dampening, however, seeing evidence in biblical plays that "contradict the opinion that the late medieval writing of post-Chaucerian England was dull and mediocre – and theologically weak by design to escape the draconian prohibitions of the Constitutions of Archbishop Arundel." "Drama, Censorship, and 'Vernacular Theology,'" *Studies in Philology* 116 (2019), 53.

or of suffering as a mark of the crucial event.[53] The push and pull of specificity and cautious or broadening interpretations that had continued throughout ancient and medieval Christianity was visible in late medieval England. On the one hand were those readings of canonical texts that argued for specific meaning – that which would implicate contemporary persons or institutions as evil or that which would argue for an imminent end to current patterns of life. Thus, a reader might match up data in society, in the church, in nature, or elsewhere with biblical texts or to align numbers in biblical texts with what was known of history in such a way as to implicate the near future as a moment of transition or a historical end point. On the other hand, there were various strategies that, while still following the text closely, allowed for allegorization, or a loose or repeated chronology, or some other detachment from a specific and constraining meaning. The former is an easier enough tendency to lapse into as signs of abused power or other phenomena seem to confirm the significance of the age in which one is living.

Regarding the latter, the tendency to step back from specificity should be credited to the North African theologians Augustine of Hippo and Tyconius (whose life story and textual legacy have not been preserved as well as Augustine's has). Some of Tyconius's interpretative principles[54] proved useful for Augustine, whose later life witnessed extreme political shifts and coincidences in the dating of the world that lent themselves to widespread popular excitement about the End.[55] Against the tendency to read the dangers of one's time into texts understood to speak of the End, the Tyconian-Augustinian tradition downplayed the millenarian and even the quantitative.[56] While Wyclif

53 See Robert Lerner on the case of the French Franciscan John of Roquetaillade (commonly known as John of Rupescissa), mentioned below, who under duress predicted a mid-14th-century plague and famine with decades of implications for the end of an age, the onset of plague oddly coinciding with the Black Death. "The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities," *American Historical Review* 86 (1981), 541–544. Rupescissa's work is sketched by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Ind.: 2006), xxxiii, n. 76.

54 In Paula Fredriksen's terms, "Tyconius … dissolves the gross periodization of 'old' dispensation and the 'new'; or, rather, he insists that the important distinction is moral and spiritual rather than temporal." "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Emmerson and McGinn, 28. Nigel Morgan furthermore characterizes Tyconius's approach to John's Apocalypse as Christological and "ecclesiological." "Latin and Vernacular Apocalypses," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*. vol. 2, ed. Richard Marsden and E. Ann Matter (Cambridge, Eng.: 2012), 413.

55 Fredriksen, 29–32.

56 For example, Tyconius emphasized qualitative meaning of numbers and time-units over reading numbers as defining precise durations.

himself and an assortment of believers in an imminent End in the late Middle Ages make strongly worded historical judgments about their age, there are traces of caution in Wyclif's exegesis and in apocalyptic statements by those who feel compelled to mark what they see as corruption in the Church. Maybe more importantly, after a specific statement of the End is committed to a text or is heard in a sermon, accommodation or revision of belief could be worked out by the communicator or audience in such a way that the apocalyptic narrative and attached beliefs remain intact. This is especially noticeable in year-based predictions,[57] but Wycliffites' labeling of evil in the church is subject to disappointment or fatigue as well. Yet not knowing certain things need not alarm one, either, as Phronesis says in Wyclif's *Trialogus*: "It is suitable that this time is hidden from us, just as it is suitable that the hour of our death and many similar sorts of things be unknown to us."[58] These underappreciated abilities of adherents to accommodate new data or to hedge against disappointment – along with the parallel responses of those who from apocalyptic disappointment turn to non-belief or who shift to a different belief system – are as important of a part of apocalypticism as the taxonomic work and source tracing done with apocalyptic statements, even as such stories of adjustment or accommodation may resist textual recording.

If safety is considered from another level, what seems normal, tolerable, and sustainable in daily life is called into question by many apocalyptic narratives, but in real time those stories are often read as caused by or substantiated by strange occurrences or seeming threats. As was true in earlier forms of Christian apocalypticism, things observable in nature amplified the sense of an imminent end.[59] One underappreciated tradition with a strong presence in England is the centuries-old and textually diffuse Fifteen Signs before Doomsday tradition. This tradition emphasized environmental upheaval, with the unsettling of earth and water, as well as stars falling from the sky. This list (in a sense, a stripped-down story) subject to adaptation gave lay and clergy alike things to look for in their immediate environments.[60] Even as this

57 Brett Whalen observes that some of Joachim's followers were disappointed in the predicted year of 1260, although his narrative was clung to by many and revised. *The Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2009), 185.

58 Lahey, trans., 308, from 4.40. "Decens quidem est quot illud tempus sit nobis absconditum, sicut decens est quod hora mortis nostrae et multa similia sunt nobis incognita." *Trialogus cum supplemento trialogo*, ed. Gotthard Lechler (Oxford: 1869), 390.

59 James T. Palmer has shown apocalyptic explanations to have deeply informed understandings of "extreme nature" in Antiquity and the earlier Middle Ages as well. "Climates of Crisis," *Viator* 48.2 (2017), 7.

60 Gayk's recent work in "Apocalyptic Ecologies" has updated and fine-tuned the work done by Heist. Also, Brandon W. Hawk has updated the narrative of the early period of the

tradition saw a mixed reception across centuries in scholastic theology,[61] the changeable list's spread emphasizes how apocalypticism can spread outside of official or high-level ecclesiastical communication.[62] And the potential for lay interpretation – something that received heightened attention in the response to Wycliffism in the early 15th century – lingered throughout the tradition's history: Heist concluded his study speculating that this tradition, though it spread widely, was thought not to threaten the work or status of the church, so by and large it was not subjected to the scrutiny that other unofficial sketches or pronouncements of the End were. In other words, measured against a host of other teachings, this tradition, even as it spread widely, might not have been seen as much of a threat to the Church's power or individual consciences.

From the standpoint of some Wycliffites, the Fifteen Signs proved too safe in a sense. What if fifteen signs are not enough? Or perhaps fifteen signs are too many, present an optimistically slow chronology, or represent a distraction from more obvious evil in front of someone in late medieval England. As Curtis Bostick has showed in his reading of the widely spread sermon "Of Mynystris in the[63] Chirche,"[64] that sermon's Wycliffite author hinted at all these dangers in relying on "fifteen tokens," since judgment could happen at any time: "All these things that we have spoken on for a long time, may be soon fulfilled; for Christ is swifter in his works than our tongues are in their speech."[65] From one angle, the Fifteen Signs – a sort of pocket version of the Christian End that some might think is open to wild errors of cosmological and natural judgment – might not get people rushing to judgment quickly enough. But from another standpoint, this urgent communication shows the apocalyptic necessity of careful reading: a more penetrating study of Scripture, made possible for a

tradition in England by highlighting certain editorial conclusions. "The Fifteen Signs before Judgment in Anglo-Saxon England," *JEGP* 117 (2018), 447–450.

61 See Lerner's recent study, where quite interesting among the exemplars is the story of Thomas Aquinas's editors seeing the need to remove Thomas's approval of the Fifteen Signs tradition. "Sign Theory," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 73 (2022), 731–32.

62 Gayk (21, n. 67) points to the "Second Sunday in Advent" sermon in Gloria Cigman, ed., *Lollard Sermons* (Oxford: 1989), 13–30.

63 In quoting the Middle English I have modernized the medieval English letter thorn (*þ*) to *th*. Similarly, the yogh (3) as in the *Lanterne of Li3t* is modernized to *gh*.

64 *English Wycliffite Sermons* 2:328–65. Bostick says the work "may have circulated as a tract." *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England*, (Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Thought) 70 (Leiden: 1998), 135.

65 "Alle thes thingus that we han spokon in long tyme, may be sone fullude; for Crist is swifture in his werkis thon oure tongus ben in ther speche." *English Wycliffite Sermons* 2:346, lines 483–85, noted in Bostick, 137, n. 116.

broader audience through translation, ought to focus on the words and power of Christ and be distrustful of the Church's words and power.[66]

Another way that safety might be understood in medieval apocalypticism is in terms of which teachings are conspicuously different from established ones, particularly if they call out ecclesiastical or secular power.[67] Wyclif's message of the apocalyptic contains elements of restraint as well as excitement, and he trusted in the machinery of academic theological debate at a time when the Church felt it needed to rein in threatening ideas. As Wyclif was arguing against ecclesiastical and clerical preservation of wealth, to cite one contentious issue, nuance would only get him so far. Just as William of Ockham did earlier in the 14th century, Wyclif built on continental Spiritual Franciscans' work to develop an ethic of apostolic poverty.[68] Radical implications of his thought emerge in 1376–77[69] as he maintains in the third volume of *De civili dominio*[70] that, as Stephen Lahey puts it, "Christ's redemptive sacrifice enables all Christians to regain natural *dominium* itself," something that had been claimed historically by the Franciscans.[71] Views of apocalyptic eschatology maintained in Wyclif's work, though difficult to systematize, have been usefully placed in conversation with those of Joachim of Fiore and the Spiritual Franciscans who built on Joachim's work.[72] The networks of texts tied to Joachim in England has proven complicated.[73] In short, some thinkers – including Spiritual Franciscans – that Wyclif engaged with in addressing fiscal excesses of the church, put him at

66 Bostick, 135–37.

67 Though Tyconian-Augustinian thinking can be considered relatively safe, more complicated negotiations are found in how, for example in the study of teaching on Antichrist, the vivid narrative given by Adso of Montier-en-Der (d. 992) can serve as a baseline (Bostick, 26–32), or how what is already established can be leveraged as "respectable" or relatively safe in the later Franciscan tradition: see Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary* (Philadelphia: 1993), ch. 2.

68 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 192.

69 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 16.

70 Ed. Johann Loserth (Oxford: 1903).

71 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 214.

72 Beyond the features of Joachism sketched below, Stephen Lahey draws out connections and distinctions in *John Wyclif*, 191–93. Furthermore, Levy notes the ways that Wyclif and Wycliffite work may have been entangled with the activity of Franciscans. "Wycliffites, Franciscan Poverty, and the Apocalypse," 295–98.

73 On the presence of pseudo-Joachite prophecy in England, see Kerby Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, Series Number 7) (2007). For a more recent consideration for a variety of controversial texts, see *Books under Suspicion*, Kerby-Fulton there providing rich context useful for the present study in a long "Chronology of Non-Wycliffite Cases of Heresy and Related Events," xix–lii.

odds with leaders of the church.[74] However, regarding thinking about the ends of ages and of whether the timing of the Last Judgment can be calculated, Wyclif was much more cautious than Joachim and the Spiritual Franciscans.[75] Spiritual Franciscans including Gerard of Borgo San Donnino (d. ca. 1276) and Peter John Olivi (ca. 1248–1298) – earlier figures building on the work of the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202) – were the subject of scandal in England throughout much of the 14th century.[76] In viewing the End, the Spiritual Franciscan tradition broke from the Tyconian-Augustinian tendency to allow for protracted time – time durations could be symbols of longer periods – and for holding back on making other specific statements of sequence.[77] Joachim and Peter emphasized heavily the first ten verses of Revelation 20 in working out a more complicated sequence of the binding of Satan, and other innovations involve emphasizing three ages (*status*) – each corresponding to a member of the Trinity and overlapping with the adjacent age – and imagining a special apocalyptic role for the Franciscans, not to mention "the beginning of yet another church."[78] The problems with the reception of their thinking were complicated: in some cases, Gerard's assumption of Joachim's legacy missed nuances of Joachim's work,[79] and Peter's thinking was for centuries limited by being transmitted through citations in works opposed to him.[80] Gerard effectively elevated Joachim's work to the level of scripture and while Peter did not go that extreme, he was accused of doing as much.[81] To step back a bit for a point of reference, Bonaventure's (d. 1274) earlier

74 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 192. See, too, Levy, "Wycliffites, Franciscan Poverty, and the Apocalypse."

75 Wilks noted Wyclif's essentially Augustinian periodization of world history, though "his own time was the nadir of the process, the point at which the downward movement had virtually reached its lowest level: the world had never been in a worse condition, and the tyrant priests had brought the Church into the condition of the Last Days." "Wyclif and the Wheel of Time," *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice*, 205–21, 180–81, quoting 181; originally published in *Studies in Church History* 33 (1997), 177–93.

76 Examples of anxiety about Peter and Gerard's texts are given in Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, including at pages 73–79 and 132–134. For Aers's argument that Langland in the C version of the intricate dream vision *Piers Plowman* is aware of but maintains distance from the Joachite tradition, see *Beyond Reformation?*, 114–22.

77 Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, 168–170.

78 Burr, "Olivi, Maifred, Na Prous, and the Shape of Joachism, ca. 1300," *Franciscan Studies* 73 (2015), 275–94, 279–280, quoting 280.

79 Burr, "Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom," 14–15.

80 Like Wyclif and Lollards, the Spiritual Franciscans have had their work misunderstood and neglected for centuries. Burr explains succinctly the trajectory of Olivian scholarship in which direct editing of Olivi's work was note taken up in earnest until the 20th century in *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, ix–x.

81 Burr, "Olivi, Maifred, Na Prous, and the Shape of Joachism," 280.

comments were much less scandalous but still speculative.[82] Franciscan narrative of the End was made problematic at the hands of later prophets including Olivi, who infamously took Bonaventure's earlier figurative mention of a resurrection of St. Francis and literalized it.[83] Such prophecies in late Spiritual Franciscan prophecy leveraged the credibility of brethren to express increased certainty as time passed on, becoming more certain of predictions.[84] Joachim's bold teachings and Bonaventure's safer ones thus accrued new details as the 13th century approached, a time that Olivi came to align with the upcoming third age. As a number of Franciscans fixated on Olivian teaching grew, they were seen as a threat to the larger order, meaning that controversial apocalyptic teachings in some ways stood in for a small group's identity as seen in the late 1310s.[85]

One commonplace of the study of late medieval apocalypticism is that the suppression of heterodox teachings did more harm than good. Even so, there is a case to be made about this tradition, which was well entrenched in Europe (with footholds in England) before Wyclif's time, that escalating prophecies posed very real threats that needed to be addressed by the Church. One major threat regards the degree to which the Church could control lay religious activity. Important to the perceived ecclesiastical problem of Olivian apocalyptic teachings was that he sought not only allies among his order but an active and engaged lay following as well.[86] The preservation of Olivi's memory after his death[87] and the loyalty to Olivi's teaching even as it questions the power of the Church[88] have some parallels in ways that later thinkers pushing for apocalyptically focused reform of the Church or dissent would have sustained followings.

Notably, data specific to England were read into biblical teachings of the End. An English historical narrative establishing the spread of some Joachite ideas in England is the *Eulogium historiarum*,[89] two of whose three

82 Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, 27–28.

83 Burr, "Olivi, Maifred, Na Prous, and the Shape of Joachism," 277.

84 For example, along with Olivi, Ubertino of Casale repeats with increased certainty the claim of Francis's resurrection. Burr, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: 2019), 312–315.

85 Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, 198–99.

86 Burr, "Olivi, Maifred, Na Prous, and the Shape of Joachism," 276. Burr credits the scholar Antonio Montefusco with developing scholarship on the intended spread of Olivian apocalyptic teaching among the laity and via translation into the vernacular (276, n. 3).

87 "Olivi, Maifred, Na Prous, and the Shape of Joachism," 276.

88 Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans* (University Park, Penn.: 2001), 209.

89 Published as *Eulogium* (*historiarum sive temporis*), ed. Frank Haydon (London: 1858–63), 3 vols.

surviving manuscripts contain John of Rupescissa's *Vade mecum*.[90] Written at Malmesbury Abbey in Wiltshire, the *Eulogium* attests to continuous apocalyptic framing of events in England traceable to the early 1360s in England.[91] Furthermore, a period of permissiveness of "Joachite or Franciscan ideologies" in England between 1368 and 1380 has been established by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton "a window of opportunity for the friars' orders to push their agenda for more access to lay revenues of the kinds traditionally enjoyed by the secular and monastic clergy – a window not created by Wycliffism, but rather exploited by it."[92] More needs to be studied along these lines. The chronology of attacks against Wyclif and those following him thus not only needs to be considered in terms of the major ecclesiastical reactions after his death but also in terms of shifting enforcement and the ways that layers of the church interfaced with each other long before that.

With so much of Wyclif's activity undocumented, with much of his written work difficult to date, and given the limitations of this study, a few challenges for Wyclif are necessarily sketched broadly here. To the extent that the Spiritual Franciscans' work was deemed problematic for making specific calculations and providing vivid illustrations of the end, Wyclif was opposed to them[93] and came across as measured. Wyclif, even as his emphases in the exegesis of John's Apocalypse shifted over his career,[94] did not want to do violence to scripture, which he maintained as the authority, to tread lightly on matters of divine knowledge. Feeling justified on a scriptural basis, he argued for the Church's power to be curtailed: for him a proper understanding of worldly and secular power was necessary for godly work leading up to the End.[95] Even as

90 Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 105; Kerby-Fulton notes, "The manuscripts are Cambridge, Trinity College 740, and Lincoln's Inn, Hale 73." *Books under Suspicion*, 436, n. 103. On the scholarly debate about Rupescissa's writing being among suppressed works as recorded in the *Opus arduum valde*, see *Books under Suspicion*, 402–403.

91 Ruth Nisse, "Prophetic Nations," *New Medieval Literatures* 4 (2001), 95–115. On the *Eulogium*'s *Continuatio* that goes into the early 15th century and on its orientation to Franciscanism, see Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 104–106, as well as the earlier study by Jeremy Catto, "An Alleged Great Council of 1374," *English Historical Review* 82 (1967), 764–67.

92 *Books under Suspicion* 104–5, with quote from 105.

93 Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 192–3; Levy, "Wycliffites, Fransciscan Poverty, and the Apocalypse," 308.

94 For the marked contrast between the Apocalypse section of the *Postilla super totam Bibliam* and the later *De apostasia*, see Levy, "Wycliffites, Franciscan Poverty, and the Apocalypse," 304–307. Levy consulted Wyclif's New Testament material in Oxford, MS. Bodl. 716.

95 Lahey, citing Wyclif's *De Antichristo, Opus evangelicum*, ed. Loserth, vol. 2, ch. 2 (London: 1895), discusses Wyclif's application of Matt. 24 in *De Antichristo*: "The traditional temptations each class will face, whether it be secular authority for priests, a life of ease for lords, or material goods for peasants, are the chief means by which Antichrist will keep the

popular expressions identified as Lollard would show variance from Wyclif's thinking, enough interconnected teachings – many of which were underscored at moments of high conflict – emerged from Wyclif to give later writers and readers much material to work with.

3 Labels and Collective Identity

The recognition of Wycliffism and Lollardy as entities in their own right are part of the story of their association with heresy, of course, but these terms also attest to the movement reaching a critical mass and making arguments about the End. A knowing community thus has claims to an apocalyptic vantage point, to seeing what is not so readily visible to everyone. If the broad term *Lollardy*, in spite of its problems of definition, its diversity of beliefs, and other factors, is to be understood as operating in a special apocalyptic space, this might be understood in terms of its emphasis on collective identity, that which is assigned to its adherents as well as to detractors. Christina Von Nolcken has observed Lollard narration of postbiblical stories being presented in terms of "generalizing plurals":[96] often this or that group is cast as evil, generalized in a way that seems to make them less human. The power to tell of the End requires capacious terms for large swathes of human history but also the ability to contain institutions and large groups of people through words.

Usage of terms central to the debate has varied for good reasons and has remained controversial.[97] A range of labels across languages for individuals and the movement including *Wycliffite, Wycliffism*, *Lollard*, and *Lollardy* – along with similar terms in other languages – attest to conflict and became assigned a range of values. The difficult-to-pin-down term *Lollard* especially speaks to shifting identity, the impulse of many clerics to mark heretics, but also to the need for lay discernment on theological matters. The term *Lollard*

church militant from its end. Any movement from within the church that fosters these temptations can only be meant to forestall the completion of history." *John Wyclif*, 193.

96 "A Certain Sameness and Our Response to It in English Wycliffite Texts," in Richard Newhauser and John A. Alford, ed., *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel* (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies) 118, (Binghamton, NY: 1995), 196.

97 Although the various notes on terms like *Wycliffite* and *Lollard* are too numerous to list here, Andrew Cole's "Intermezzo: Wycliffism Is Not 'Lollardy'" (from *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*, 72–74) remains an important statement, as does Somerset's justification for the lowercase *lollard* accompanied by a broader discussion of terms in *Feeling like Saints*, 15–18.

and its related terms appear to have been brought into England after the term *Lollar*(*d*) had been used for decades prior to the earliest known applications to Wycliffites in the 1380s.[98] In its earlier instances *Lollard* marked a variety of forms of religious dissent, much of which sought to empower the laity.[99] These terms have been used inconsistently, and they belie some discontinuities in thinking and in social activity.[100]

Collective identity was also central to the antifraternalism and anticlericalism in this period in England, quite frequently threaded together with notions of apocalyptic evil, much of which comes from or is closely related to Wyclif. To be sure, as Bostick notes, focusing on "anticlericalism" could miss the larger points of institutional evil that Wycliffites argued for.[101] And to say he was opposed to friars or to Franciscans is to miss much of the point, too. As Levy has noted, Wyclif's relationship with Franciscans was a complicated one. Furthermore, his awareness of and positions of clerical poverty came into sharper focus later in his life. In attacking the structures of the Church and those whom he felt were abusing the Church's power and resources; however, he was providing tools that others would use for less nuanced calling-out of clerical corruption.

Broadly speaking, Wyclif was capable of emphasizing the urgency of being attacked, creating space for the collective identity for those opposing evil in the church, as Michael Wilks noted.[102] Persecution was something that

98 Larsen notes in "Are All Lollards Lollards?" that "it is clear that at least by 1400, English authorities conceived of Lollardy as rooted in Wyclif's teachings" (in Somerset, Havens, and Pitard, ed., *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, 59–72, 69). On etymology, see also Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, 18–20.

99 Ian Forrest floats the possibility that associates the term with "radical religion, popular dissent, and lay initiative that encompassed the beghards and beguines of northern Europe, the beguins of Languedoc, Franciscan and Dominican tertiaries, the *romiti* (a lay-eremitical movement) of Italy and other unnamed and shadowy groups" (in Lollardy and Late Medieval history, Wycliffite Controversies, ed. Bose and Hornbeck, 121–134, 131.)

100 John H. Arnold's recent consideration of discourses tied to the terms "anticlerical," "sceptical," "disputational," and "rebellious" via heresy trial records seeks to de-essentialize Lollardy while accounting for religious activity in flux. "Voicing Dissent: Heresy Trials in Later Medieval England," *Past & Present* 245 (2019), 3–37.

101 Bostick, 178.

102 "Wyclif and the Great Persecution," 180: "Although Wyclif and his supporters escaped effective condemnation in 1377–8 and continued to enjoy royal protection, one of the great problems in Wyclif's personal history is that it was precisely at this point that he began to issue a steady flow of horror stories about the tribulations of the faithful and the way that their numbers were being cut down. If we accept his insistence that the number of his followers was but a few, those few must have suffered massively. It was, he said at one point, as if God had gone to sleep: there was a savage wave of repression on a

needed to be visualized. Furthermore, his vision of "pore preestis"[103] driven by the belief they represented good against the church leadership's evil, sought to demonetize Christian teaching and upset the system by which the church enriched itself. Strong antifraternal language has been observed with Wyclif's engagement in the 1380s in *De fundatione sectarum* with apocalyptic teachings from the epistles,[104] as Szittya notes.[105] The characterization of priests and friars being too worldly seems to have intensified in Wycliffite circles beyond Wyclif's life. In particular the *Opus arduum valde*, a commentary on John's Apocalypse written between Christmas 1389 and Easter 1390, calls into question a wide range of church institutions ranging from the friars to the papacy. Bostick traces the "Wycliffite endorsement of disendowment of clergy"[106] to the *Opus arduum valde*.[107] Bostick also points out that in this work "[t]he locusts in Revelation have hair like women, which the imprisoned exegete interprets as the soft, effeminate habits of the fratres," who are furthermore characterized as lazy and self-serving.[108] In early Wycliffite challenges to the church the friars posed easy targets. In the rhetoric of the period the figure of Cain from Genesis, displeasing God and cursed to roam the earth, was an especially rich image assigned to the friars with the letters of the name, CAIM, standing for the Carmelites, Austins, Jacobites (Dominicans), and Minorites

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huge scale. Close analysis of his words, however, suggests that the dangers involved may have consisted more of risks being taken rather than actual atrocities suffered."

103 This phrasing, invoked frequently as part of a Wycliffite ethic of noble clerical poverty, has been argued by Clopper not to be exclusive to Lollards. "Franciscans, Lollards, and Reform," in Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard, ed., *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: 2003), 177–196. Lahey's section "John Wyclif: Spiritual and Devotional Guide?" within the introduction to *Wycliffite Spirituality*, ed. Hornbeck, Lahey, and Somerset (New York: 2013), 33, makes a brief case for the "poor preachers" ethic being Wyclif's legacy; see, too, Lahey, *John Wyclif*, 165–66.

104 Szittya cites Wyclif's handling of 2 Pet. 2, 1 Tim. 4, 2 Cor. 11:26, 2 Tim. 3, and 1 Jn. 3 in *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 180–81.

105 "Although the application of these texts to the friars is traditional, Wyclif's exegesis bears his characteristic signature. The friars are the 'adulterous generation' who think religion lies only in 'sensible signs' like the rough cloth habit or the knotted belt. They are the 'noonday demons' of Ps. 90:6, unleashed upon the world at the 'loosing of Satan' some 1,000 years after Christ, and who threaten the world not only with hypocrisy but with wars like the Flanders crusade. Most of all the treatise's concern with 'sects' is typically Wycliffite." Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 181. In this reading the friars' apocalyptic evil is tied to specific events, including the Despenser Crusade noted above.

106 Wyclif late in his life floated a number of policies that would challenge the Church's authority, including allowing religious to break their vows. Larsen, *School of Heretics*, 164.

107 Bostick, 105.

108 Bostick, 101.

(Franciscans).[109] The pervasiveness of fraternal activity, seen as effective evangelism and pastoral care by some, was understood as an infringement by others, lay and clergy alike. Over centuries, the friars had their legitimacy frequently questioned for their orders' relatively late development, and they suffered from a reputation roughly parallel to what enemies said of Lollards: by the time English Lollards became recognized as such and were seen as outside the visible church, they were seen as something new, lacking a claim to tradition. The emphasis on the necessity of lay engagement in this moment and against the challenges from the established church came through as part of the texture of many works, including the *Opus arduum valde*.[110] This commentary was seen as important in Anne Hudson's groundbreaking scholarship,[111] which called attention to how close that vision of persecution came to being actualized. In recent decades of scholarship, the anonymous[112] work has emerged as a powerful testimony to the persecution of Wycliffites as well as strong evidence for such subversive apocalyptic messages as those challenging the papacy persisting and spreading in spite of intended suppression of such messages. Overall, the imprisoned writer[113] of the *Opus arduum valde* presented sweeping statements of collective identity in his commentary, ultimately seeing connections between Roman imperial evil and evils of the Roman church.[114] This cycle of history, seen frequently in medieval apocalyptic writings, connects back to antiquity and argues for the present being parallel to it.

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109 Margaret Aston, "'Caim's Castles': Poverty, Politics, and Disendowment," in R.B. Dobson, ed., *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester: 1984), 46.

110 The importance of the laity having increased involvement in church affairs is highlighted in the *Opus arduum valde*, discussed below. The editors in their introduction note, "Inserted between the interpretation of Rev 2:17 and Rev 2:18 is a telling digression about the rights of the laity. The author refutes the view held by some mendicants that even scholarly laymen are not permitted to study the Holy Scriptures, to possess them in vernacular translation, or to inform others about them". Romolo Cegna, Christoph Galle, and Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, "Introduction," *Opus arduum valde: A Wycliffite Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Leiden: 2021), 44. See, too, the edited text, 167–73.

111 The work figured into her *Premature Reformation* after being introduced to a substantial Anglophone scholarly audience by the earlier "A Neglected Wycliffite Text," *Lollards and Their Books*, 43–67, originally pub. in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29 (1978), 257–79.

112 The author's identity other than his status as an imprisoned preacher and perhaps a first name of *Vilhelmus*/William still remains a mystery (Cegna, Galle, and Schäufele, ed., *Opus arduum valde*, 3–4). Kerby-Fulton cautiously suggests, as had Hudson in *Lollards and Their Books* (62) that the work may have been written by the Oxford scholar Nicholas Hereford (d. ca. 1420). *Books under Suspicion*, 210, 224–228, 350.

113 On parallels to Rupescissa's prison writing and the *Opus* writer's, see Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 222–223.

114 Bostick, 103.

Another polemical work, the Middle English *Lanterne of Light*, situates this concern in terms that will resonate with those sensitive to ecclesiastical correction and restriction of religious messages in the vernacular:

> The third assault of Antichrist is Inquisition. As the prophet says: *Secundum multitudinem ire sue non queret*.[115] That is to say: Antichrist inquires, seeks, and listens where he may find any man or woman that writes, reads, learns, or studies God's law in her mother tongue, to lead her life after the pleasing will of God, and soon he catches them in his censures, and afterward smites as he may most grievously hurt them.[116]

Here individual persecution is understood as affecting a wide range of people, for acts and beliefs that were encountered commonly.

While a pattern of aligning church authority with evil has been found in Wycliffite texts and has been used as a major factor to identify some texts and some adherents as Wycliffite, broader concerns with the apocalyptic outside of recognizable Wycliffite circles fed into this rhetoric, which seems to have tracked with a sincere biblical literalism in many corners of society.[117] This must be true just as Wimbledon's sermon *Redde rationem villicationis tue*, not participating in the same Wycliffite historicist reading of the Antichrist[118] within a prescriptive chronology, cannot be seen as completely detached from Wyclif and the age so deeply affected by him.[119] As Alexandra Walsham has

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115 Ps. 9:25b in the Vulgate Bible, detached from Ps. 9 in others, rendered thus in Douai-Rheims: "according to the multitude of his wrath, he will not seek him."

116 The translation follows Dean's glosses closely. "The thridde saught of Anticrist is Inquiscioun. As the prophet seith: *Secundum multitudinem ire sue non queret*. That is to seie: Anticrist enquerith, sechith, and herkneth where he mai fynde ony man or womman that writith, redith, lerneth, or studieth Goddis lawe in her modir tung, to lede her lijf aftir the plesing wille of God; and soone he caccheth hem in hise sensuris, and aftir smytith as he mai moost grevousli hirten hem." In James Dean, ed., *Medieval English Political Writings* (Kalamazoo: 1996), 88.

117 Contrary to the present study's emphasis on a literalism in much Lollard apocalypticism where apocalyptic timing and contingency were central concerns, Anna Lewis emphasizes instead the rhetorical power of apocalypticism and the sophistication with which Lollards may have used apocalyptic languages to various advantages. "Exegesis of the End: Limitations of Lollard Apocalypticism as Revealed in a Commentary on Matthew 24," *Literature and Theology* 23 (2009), 376–77.

118 Bostick traces the development of Wyclif's turn toward historical judgment on this issue, citing the papal schism as the turning point, 60–75.

119 On the "Lollard appropriation" of this orthodox Catholic sermon, see Baker, 637. For consideration of whether the Middle English or Wycliffite Bible is part of the story of this sermon, see Stephen Morrison, "The Use of the Wycliffite Translation in Other Middle

maintained, "the apocalyptic fervour of Wimbledon's sermon was surely a product of the same mood of urgency that engendered celebrated Wycliffite works on this subject. Like other preachers who dared to tackle the contentious issue of the appearance of AntiChrist (*sic*), he was surely sailing close to the wind."[120] Such competing conceptions of danger persecution affected Western European popular thinking about the End of an age for generations to come. To argue from a broad field of data that actions of a large religious body are evil is one thing; to situate Britain as a special vantage point for the development of the Church apocalyptic events is another. In Michael Wilks's reading of Wyclif's *De ecclesia*, Wyclif is hinting at England having special claims as a site of Christianity:

> The *ecclesia Anglicana*, it seemed, had a degree of antiquity deriving from its direct descent from the time of Christ, which could not be matched by the French church or other new foundations. Therefore, unlike earlier fourteenth-century upholders of lay supremacy, Wyclif did not need to deal in terms of Roman law or natural rights like Marsilius of Padua or William of Ockham: it was enough to equate Edward III with Old Testament kingship, to make him lord of the promised land, a land-lord of the realm, the only person from whom the English clergy could derive their rights and possessions, and who correspondingly enjoyed the power of a Solomon or an Ezra to appoint, depose, or dispossess them.[121]

A special role for Britain is also found in the dissident preacher Walter Brut's[122] response to accusations of heresy made against him by Bishop John Trefnant of Hereford.[123] Ruth Nisse notes that for Brut "[t]he Britons are the people chosen from among all others to witness first the revelation of Antichrist and the 'calling of the Gentiles' to the fulfillment of the gospel."[124] Such exceptionalism shows another level to the issues of identity considered in England in this period. Social labels involving factors ranging from religious order to

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English Texts," in Elizabeth Solopova, ed., *The Wycliffite Bible* (Leiden: 2016), 406–425, 410–11.

120 "Inventing the Lollard Past," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58 (2007), 635.

121 Wilks, "Royal Patronage and Anti-Papalism 132–3, 117–145," originally published in *Studies in Church History*, *Subsidia* 5 (1987), 135–63. Wilks cites *De ecclesia*, 30.

122 His story is related briefly in Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 99; see also Jurkowski, "Who Was Walter Brut?", *English Historical Review* 127 (2012), 285–302; and Aston, "Lollard Women Priests?" in *Lollards and Reformers* (London: 1984), 49–70.

123 Ruth Nisse, "Prophetic Nations," 107–110.

124 Nisse cites the *Registrum J. Trefnant*, 295. "Prophetic Nations," 110, n. 49.

geography indeed mattered and assisted individual adherents in determining their apocalyptic perspectives.

So much of socially applied apocalypticism centers on how people are unified or divided. Can a group develop a coherent view of reality where those outside the group are irreconcilably divided? From another standpoint, might a view shared by many seem evil and conspiratorial?

Collective identity thus can carry deep meaning when coupled with an apocalyptic imperative.

4 Diversity and Change through (or despite) Reading

With so many individuals considering the End in this period, it stands to reason that they would not be reading the End in the same way. The divergence of belief is worth noting, as at some points Lollards were accused of an unreasoning singularity of thought.[125] That distrust of the church's power was central to Lollardy and that lay involvement was essential to it are seen as commonplaces. Still, just as there are limitations to how Lollardy can be defined,[126] there existed a wide range of expressions of apocalyptic belief within what was understood by that label. As has become increasingly clear, Lollardy – as it was understood without and from within – cannot be understood in purely systematic theological terms. Older narratives of Lollards' beliefs fitting into a neat list or creed – some such formulations only preserved in the context of adversarial heresy proceedings – have been challenged. Somerset maintains that a sermon cycle found in Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College MS 74 (SS74) (texts that were circulated for around a century)[127] illustrates a variance

125 Anna Lewis highlights the ultimately failed prelate Reginald Pecock's mid-15th-century construction of Lollard reading as resisting reason as well as the fellowship of the church. "'Give the Reason for the Hope That You Have': Reginald Pecock's Challenge to (Non)Disputing Lollards," *Studies in Philology* 112/1 (2015), 55–60.

126 Arnold, "The Materiality of Unbelief in Late Medieval England," in Sophie Page, ed., *The Unorthodox Imagination in Late Medieval Britain* (Manchester: 2010), 68. Larson, parallel to Arnold's use of non-English examples that fit certain "Lollard tests," points to pre-Wycliffite dissenters that, if one uses too broad of a test, look like Lollards. "Are All Lollards Lollards?" in Somerset, Havens, and Pitard, ed., *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: 2003), 59.

127 Somerset's online Appendix A to *Feeling Like Saints* indicates that "the sermons in this manuscript survived and were read across the fifteenth century." The appendix notes, too, that one of the copies of Wimbledon's sermon *Redde racionem villiacionis tue*, mentioned above, is found later in this manuscript, with another text in between it and the long sermon cycle. https://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=eng_suppub.

of belief that would help change the narrative that lists such as the *Twelve Conclusions*[128] are useful in systematizing Lollard belief authoritatively.[129] The diversity of views Somerset adds to the conversation causes us to understand broadly Wyclif-influenced religion in England as decidedly post-scholastic, far more fluid than its contemporary chroniclers and later scholars of it fashioned it to be. Furthermore, Lollard apocalypticism does not always take predictable forms, as has been suggested in Bracy Hill's analysis of exegesis from the book of Daniel in English Wycliffite Sermons.[130] Hill's challenge to Bostick's broad narrative of increased pessimism in Wycliffism post-Wyclif can be seen as broadening the expressions and possibilities of apocalypticism in this period, even as Levy suggests that Bostick's explanation has far more support than counterevidence.[131] It stands to reason, too, that a variety of readers of Scripture – many of them disconnected from the Church in different ways – would venture into different forms of interpretation and could be relying on traditional readings to different extents.

After all, the academic and textual infrastructure taken for granted by the Scholastic Wyclif but not available to him at the end of his life, meant that texts would be produced in new channels and circulated in new ways. The means by which individuals known as Wycliffites or Lollards communicated about the Bible seems different from the commentary tradition that Wyclif participated in.[132] Even as extensive engagement with various parts of Scripture is evident in texts traced to Lollards, nothing on the order of a full commentary on a book of the Bible (save perhaps the *Opus arduum valde*, whose reception and survival in Bohemia and not England was noted by Hudson)[133] traceable to Wycliffites seems to survive.[134] Although arguments from a lack of evidence are hard to sustain, there is a possibility that the lack of formal commentary is at least partly due to reading and commenting practices more regularly being in-the-moment and ephemeral.

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128 Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, 24–29.

129 *Feeling like Saints*, 54. For the possibility that these sermons – copied from an established Wycliffite cycle, might be understood in the manuscript's context of "a diversity of theological opinion" not necessarily indicative of individual Lollard sentiment, see Helen Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: 1993), 298–99.

130 "Apocalyptic Lollards?: The Conservative Use of the Book of Daniel in the English Wycliffite Sermons." *Church History and Religious Culture* 90 (2010): 1–23.

131 "Wycliffites, Franciscan Poverty, and the Apocalypse," 297.

132 See Smalley, Kraebel, and others, noted above, on Wyclif's accomplishment (or lack thereof).

133 Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 265. For a possible explanation for the transmission and "preservation of the *Opus arduum*" by Peter Payne or Hieronymus of Prague, see Christophe Galle, "Apocalypse Now!," *Mediaevistik* 30 (2017), 242.

134 Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 267.

As it becomes clearer that Lollard engagement with Scripture took forms not specifically prescribed by Wyclif,[135] scholars continue to consider the theological corollaries of commenting and summarizing the Bible outside of traditional channels. Beyond the abundance of sermons that survives,[136] a variety of texts provide either records or even models of scriptural interpretation. One key to how Scripture was read may be in the *Middle English Bible Summary* (a volume of over 200 folios in Oxford, Trinity 93 lacking the Catholic epistles and John's Apocalypse),[137] which is characterized by Somerset as emphasizing "the interplay between suffering and comfort."[138] Somerset notes an emphasis on tribulation emphasizing martyrology, which shares quite a bit of ground with various modes of urgent apocalyptic thinking.[139] The significance of Glossed Gospels and other parabiblia[140] continues to be examined, and ample evidence for Wycliffite emphases has been noted in works such as the MS Bodley 554 Wycliffite Psalter glosses[141] and in glossed gospels,[142] including those discussed in the last decade by Hudson[143] and Somerset.[144] Glossed Gospels appear, along with other Lollard literary activities, to show "collaborative work to an

135 Theological diversity is worth noting, but one might consider Alastair Minnis's statement that Wyclif's later followers lacked the interpretive sophistication modeled by Wyclif. "'Authorial Intention' and 'Literal Sense' in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 75 (1975), 15.

136 Copeland, "Lollard Writings," in Larry Scanlon, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100–1500* (Cambridge, Eng.: 2009), 116.

137 For further description, see Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, 179.

138 Ibid., 183.

139 Ibid., 199.

140 A brief sketch of partial texts (possibly by "book producers and readers who may have had very different agendas from the bible's translators" or Bible-adjacent materials) neglected in many studies is found in Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, 167–68; quotation from 167.

141 For example, Michael Kuczynski notes these emphases in glosses for Psalm 90, lxvii and 147–148, as well as for Psalm 47, lxvii–lxviii and 69, where a comparison is made to the Wycliffite *Lanterne of Light*: *A Glossed Wycliffite Psalter: Oxford Bodleian Library MS Bodley 554* (Early English Text Society o.s.) 352–53 (Oxford: 2019), 2 vols.

142 As Anne Hudson noted, the term *glossed gospel* should be understood to mean a commentary, not a simple approach to translation. *Doctors in English: A Study of the Wycliffite Gospel Commentaries* (Liverpool: 2015), xix.

143 Some manuscripts contain commentary by the French scholastic Odo of Châteauroux (d. 1273) consisting of "much criticism of the contemporary ecclesiastical establishments." Hudson, *Doctors in English*, cxii–cxiii, with quotation from cxiii. Hudson provides editions of the attached material, 87–98.

144 Somerset, "'No Man May Serue to Two Lordis': The Lollard Glossed Gospels as Spiritual Advice in John Colop's Common-Profit Book, CUL Ff.6.31," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 22 (2019), 73–365.

agreed plan over a considerable length of time."[145] Mary Raschko has further suggested that the Glossed Gospels' prologues through their patterns of citation may be read as showing excitement over Scripture and promoting among clergy something that all Christians can benefit from.[146]

The translation of the Bible into Middle English remains a matter essential to consider with the spread of Wycliffism, even as translation *per se* was not as controversial in the late fourteenth century as it was previously thought to be.[147] The program of translating the Bible into Middle English may not have been as predominantly of a Wycliffite project as has been assumed in scholarship titling the bible as "Wycliffite."[148] Even so, what has been identified as the *General Prologue* and other texts exist to show that a number of persons developed rhetoric for the use of the Bible that was meaningful to many Lollards.[149] And more to the concern of vernacular scriptures being available to a wide audience in late medieval England, Lollards contributed greatly to the consumption, dissemination, and preservation of these Bibles, not to mention accompanying literature.

The translation of Scripture into the Middle English Bible was framed, Rita Copeland maintains, "in terms of a hermeneutics of access," where ultimately

145 Hudson, *Doctors in English*, cli. Hudson's work was based primarily off of these manuscripts: BL MS Additional 28026, BL MS Additional 41125, Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Bodley 243 ("companion" to 41125), Cambridge University Library MS Kk.2.9, and York Minster Library MS XVI.D.2 (xxx–xxxvi).

146 "Most *Glossed Gospels* (*sic*) prologues open as if in the middle of a debate, in this case over lay access to Scripture: with rapid citation of biblical and exegetical authorities, the prologues seem to speak directly to reticent clergy as they advocate spreading scriptural teachings to a radically inclusive Christian community." "A Humble Guise: The Role of Prologues in the Wycliffite Glossed Gospels," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 31 (2017), 139.

147 On the lack of controversial translation in the Middle English Bible translations and on translation of scripture being allowed in the 14th century, see Hudson, "The Origin and Textual Tradition of the Wycliffite Bible," in Elizabeth Solopova, ed., *The Wycliffite Bible* (Leiden: 2016), 134.

148 See Henry Ansgar Kelly's *The Middle English Bible*, where on the basis of documentary and stylistic evidence the Wycliffite nature of the early and late versions is called into question. Kelly's "reassessment" makes a case for avoiding the descriptor *Wycliffite* for Middle English Bible, noting, too, how the story of Middle English translation work has been understood in different ways by late-20th-century scholars including Wilks, Hudson, and Lawton (11–12).

149 For an overview of the *General Prologue*, see Kantik Ghosh, "The Prologues," in Elizabeth Solopova, ed., *The Wycliffite Bible* (Leiden: 2016), 167–172; for an argument that the most often cited prologue's composer may not have been of the same mind as all of the translators and that the sequencing and purpose of the two versions of the Middle English Bible may have been misunderstood by scholars, see Kelly, *Middle English Bible*, 39–46.

"translation becomes a socially inclusive gesture."[150] By the early 15th century strong arguments against the necessity of lay access to Scripture in their language of preference were now open to lay scrutiny. Elsewhere, Copeland, in discussing a Wycliffite treatise on translation of the Bible,[151] notes a stark contrast between a Wycliffite ethic of the literal against the extreme prohibition against biblical translation enforced in Arundel's *Constitutions*.[152] At least a couple of tensions evident in this period are worth considering regarding the politics of language. One tension predating Wyclif (but continuing after his death, coming into focus in early 150 century debates of Bible translation) regards whether translation can exist as something distinct from more subjectively laden operation known as interpretation.[153] Even for trained clerics, individuals must have understood the work of translation differently, if one accounts for the different levels of facility with which even different clerics moved from one language to another as they worked through theology.[154] Gaps between the linguistic ideal and practice can cut both ways, of course: a priest unable to deliver the straight meaning of Scripture could be seen as just as problematic as the lay reader who cannot understand it properly without guidance and context. The latter concern was held up as the more imminent threat at the high point of translation debate in England. Some of the argumentation developed in 1407 for Arundel's Constitutions stipulated that translation was tied up with all of the most important work that clergy had to do, including administering the sacraments and preaching.[155] All things considered, a simple ethic of translation in the vein of Wyclif might be defined as providing ease of access for work that is supposed to be difficult,[156] even all-consuming.

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150 *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991), 225.

151 Treatise published in Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, 107.

152 Copeland, "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory: Aquinas, Wyclif, and the Lollards," in Walter Jost and Michael J. Hyde, ed., *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader* (New Haven: 1997), 348–49.

153 Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 90–91.

154 Watson illustrates: "Obviously, Oxford scholars, living in a clerical and Latin-speaking community, viewed matters in a somewhat different light from clerics who lived among the laity and wrote in English as well as from writers like Julian and Hoccleve." "Censorship and Cultural Change," 851.

155 Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy* (Cambridge, Eng.: 2001), 90–91.

156 Elizabeth Schirmer notes a tension between ease and difficulty: "Wyclif himself understood the literal sense of Scripture, not as the *littera* on the manuscript page, but rather as the meaning in the *mens dei*. Interpretive labour is thus required to move from the material forms of Scripture to their spiritual *forma*. Scripture, moreover, exists to be used, to provide teaching and model ways of thinking and feeling. Avoiding some kinds of annotation and encouraging others, and varying annotative practices across biblical

Overall, in broad social terms, writing and books had tremendous implications for power in the late Middle Ages. For Steven Justice, the 1381 Peasants' Revolt is presented as showing a special character, "a knowingness in the ways and forms and occasions of documentary writing."[157] Calculations based on the power of the written word in the secular sphere may have affected how the revolt played out, showing how potentially permanent texts could affect the fortunes of persons across society.[158] Writing is considered in another vein in a late 15th-century example given by Hudson:

> That the written word spoke louder and clearer than the heard word is very clearly revealed in the statement of Richard Gilmyn of Coventry in 1486: he had the Lord's prayer, the *Ave*, and the creed in English, and also another book containing the gospels and epistles in English, according to which he wished to live and by which he believed to be saved, and he thought that "*nullus presbiter melius loquitur in pulpito quam ille liber loquitur*."[159]

Here the established priest falls short of what the pure message of the book can accomplish. This period saw texts taking on new meanings as persons come to cherish newfound literacy or the variety of texts available. Thus, books in this period become at least marginally more accessible, and more people become more familiar with them. Eleanor Baker has recently seen patterns of emphasis in some apocalyptic late medieval English sermons on books' fragility, encoding, permanence, and other qualities.[160] In addition to book metaphors from John's Apocalypse being featured prominently in Wimbledon's sermon noted above, Baker notes a consistent emphasis on books being used for accounting or reckoning in the Wimbledon sermon[161] as well as the unedited "Sermon for

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and parabiblical genres, lollard textual forms enact a 'sinuous and subtle' relationship between the inherent 'openness' of Scripture and a felt need to guide interpretation, especially for lay readers." "Form and Sign in the Margins: Annotating *Oon of Foure*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 31 (2017), 198.

157 *Writing and Rebellion* (Berkeley: 1994), 55. The work of the court or "shire-moot," Justice argues, is done "in a context that also displayed, openly, the configurations of local power" (57).

158 The sophisticated sort of rebellion explained by Justice involves not mere destruction: "At Bury and at St. Albans, the rebels were willing to save old documents or preserve them, whichever suited their interests best" (69).

159 "… no priest speaks better in the pulpit than that book speaks." Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 187, the register cited being "Lichfield reg. Hales," 166v.

160 Baker, "Metaphors of Textual Materiality."

161 Ibid., 638–39.

the First Sunday in Lent" from BL MS Harley 26.[162] Listeners and readers are reminded to take account of their sinful thoughts as well as their deeds,[163] as they await judgment.

In a more decidedly Lollard vein committed to vernacular religious reading, readers thus accountable might understandably focus on Scripture in simple ways. Where plainness of style has often been seen as a fault for Wycliffites, Rebecca Wilson Lundin has cast this as "sophisticated," a virtue.[164] Concerns of a characteristically Lollard style have been considered in earnest since Anne Hudson's "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?," that work flagging the need for scientific study when scholars, following the late medieval chronicler Henry Knighton's claims about Lollards' characteristic language.[165] Emphasis and clarity in repetition might be seen in a positive light as well, even as Copeland[166] and Kerby-Fulton[167] have made largely convincing generalizations about a vast corpus. In post-*Constitutions* Lollardy, with texts primarily arguing for their group's existence or conservatively not straying from the biblical-literal, individual adherents certainly clung to their cherished tracts and scriptures in fear and in apocalyptic earnestness. Exceptions to an ideologically dictated plainness of style can be noted,[168] but an ethic of clarity and directness and a verbally evident consistency of communication seems important given how many patterns of language were labeled by Lollards as evil.[169] Against what have been held up as the literary standards of late-medieval England, frequently for Lollards substance mattered above all else.[170]

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162 Ibid., 647–50.

163 Ibid., 639.

164 "Rhetorical Iconoclasm: The Heresy of Lollard Plain Style," *Rhetoric Review* 27 (2008), 133.

165 "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" in *Lollards and Their Books*, 174. Originally published in *So Meny People, Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English, Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. Michael Benskin and M.L. Samuels (Edinburgh: 1981), 15–30. Hudson also touched on medieval and modern perceptions of Lollard style in *The Premature Reformation*, 219–20.

166 "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory."

167 From Kerby-Fulton's review of Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards*, *Speculum* 77 (2002), 880: "Lollard apocalyptic thinking is, with the exception of a few brilliant mavericks, just like Lollard anything else: that is, it tends to be dogmatic, repetitive, and given to literal-mindedness."

168 Gayk, "Lollard Writings, Literary Criticism, and the Meaningfulness of Form," in Bose and Hornbeck, ed., *Wycliffite Controversies*, 136–7.

169 Gayk presents evidence from the *Lanterne of Light* and the *Rosarium*. "Lollard Writings," 135–136.

170 Raschko and Schirmer note that Lollard texts may seem "flatly discursive, deliberately downplaying form in favour of content" when juxtaposed with how theology is presented

This could reasonably be seen as a philosophical and theological taste-making in a period of burgeoning literacy. Margaret Aston productively argued for a deceptive simplicity – indeed, veiled sophistication and complicated meaning – in what counted as the everyday:

> For all the everydayness of some kinds of reading and writing and texts, there was still a sacred aspect to letters. This existed on many levels and included beliefs that were more magical than devout. We must not forget the ability of letters to be arcane: that is to conceal rather than reveal: to be symbols that enclosed a mystery rather than transmitting a message. This could be true of single letters, of letters grouped as monograms comparable to images, of texts, and of complete books.[171]

Again, the interplay between what conceals and what reveals is central to the apocalyptic. In moments where an impending End is taken seriously, the ability to read that is key to sorting out beliefs is intensified by the apocalyptic. As Lollards across several decades used texts as a means to survive individually and as a community, they indeed saw deep meaning in language that others saw as prosaic, in their age already and increasingly in later ages.

5 Some Final Considerations

The competing narratives of the times of Wyclif and Lollardy bespeak competing methodologies and, in many cases competing corpora defined in terms of theology, dissent, language, style, and various social factors. As much ink has been spilled on account of Wyclif and Lollards, more research into the apocalyptic activity of this age – on its own terms and comparatively – remains necessary. Wyclif's supposed legacy and the popular engagement often subsumed into the term *Lollardy* and so many other mutually dependent issues will continue to be worked out. The terms used in scholarship continue to pose challenges. Just as serious problems of identification from outside Lollardy in the Middle Ages existed,[172] controversies and problems of identification along these lines from those of us well outside the Middle Ages likely continue into

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by William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the work of the *Pearl*-poet. "Introduction: Textual Form and Spiritual Formation," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 31 (2017), 123.

171 *Lollards and Reformers* (London: 1984), 195.

172 Anne Hudson, "Who Is My Neighbor?", in *Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. Mishtooni Bose and J. Patrick Hornbeck II (Turnhout: 2011), 93–94.

the future, as the necessarily forensic textual means of sorting these matters of course have their limitations due to the internal and external evidence lacking in many surviving manuscripts.[173]

Our understanding of the meaning of reading, writing, dissemination, and censorship in premodern contexts will also doubtless continue to develop and affect our understanding of the apocalyptic in this extended apocalyptic moment. And, of course, more basic variables of language, when re-assessed, will affect the data available to us. Challenges of describing form as in Middle English style have been noted by Shannon Gayk: for one thing, the boom in Lollard studies in recent decades coincided with a decidedly post-formalist period in literary studies, which has limited the sort of language-based research questions brought to the fore.[174] As Anne Hudson suggested decades ago, "human judgment about semantic force" will affect the meaning that we see in medieval texts.[175] On another important front, there remains considerable debate related to late medieval Latin texts tangential to or derivative from Wyclif. Divergences of understanding of matters of tone and style – with deep significance for apocalyptic rhetoric – are still being debated.[176] For example, the characterization of Wyclif's Latin as ill-formed or extremely different from that which was produced in Oxford in the late 14th century[177] has been challenged, as have many notions of radical departures in content. To the question of style, Mark Thakkar contends, "Wyclif's Latin is actually quite typical for a 14th-century Oxford scholastic."[178] Important questions for the apocalyptic need to be worked out through these debates, including how plugged in Wyclif and others were to their own religious communities and how their use of language fit with their contemporary speech communities as well as with tradition. And how do judgments of Lollards' language by their contemporaries compare with our judgments of their language from today? The language of urgency and the urgency of language deserve continued attention with regard to the apocalypticism in Wyclif's age, particularly with regard to matters of temporality, contingency, uncertainty, and in-between-ness – all issues that

173 See Somerset's note in "Their Writings" in Hornbeck, ed., *A Companion to Lollardy* (Leiden: 2016), 76–77.

174 Gayk, "Lollard Writings," 138–148.

175 Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?," 174.

176 This is argued in Mark Thakkar's recent review article "*Duces caecorum*," *Vivarium* 58 (2020), 357–383.

177 See, for one example, Henry Ansgar Kelly's generalization in *The Middle English Bible*, 33–34, contested by Thakkar, 381–82.

178 Thakkar maintains that readers of English late Scholastics "will find his Latin to be carefully structured, clearly signposted …," 382.

will continue to be refined in cultural and literary theory as well as in more plodding grammatical and stylistic work. All these issues are central to as well as adjacent to the apocalypse, meaning that a wide range of scholarship must be considered in studying the apocalyptic. This also means that disqualification of things as non-apocalyptic should not be done so hastily.

Ultimately, the apocalyptic environment of England in the late Middle Ages, evident from countless vantage points in society, would not be as rich if it were not for the contributions of Wyclif himself, those aligned with him for good or ill, and the various ways their ideas echoed over the next century and created political and rhetorical space for dissent. Lollardy, despite its challenges to definition and its obvious discontinuities, can fruitfully be understood as a fluid succession of ideas that allowed for individual, lay contributions. This proved true whether those contributions were to communicate without flourish, to refuse to expand on the prosaic, or even to hole up and resist debate. Those studying the history of Christian apocalypticism, often not paying enough attention to this period in England and looking for other authoritative or traditional systems of thought instead, often fail to acknowledge the dynamics of this pivotal moment in lay Christian belief and practice.

More broadly, the study of late-medieval apocalypticism, particularly in England, might better account for necessary vacillation between the conflicting narratives and impulses that individual persons faced regularly. As violent social upheaval, exercises of governmental or ecclesiastical power, plague, and other matters had immediate effects, they also, when seen as unsustainable, required narratives geared toward hope in the divine. As much as we seek out clear data of this or that pattern within Christian apocalypticism (or clear evidence that a certain variable is absent), we might consider the possibilities of alternation and life in the in-between. The emotional and ethical dimensions of the apocalyptic noted by Shannon Gayk in reference to the Fifteen Signs might be considered in relation to a wide range of apocalyptic narratives that build pessimism and ask persons to steel themselves for a sequence of troubles.[179] We might also take seriously David Coley's assumption "that the human response to traumatic events exists as a negotiation between acknowledgement and suppression, between the need to speak events that are too terrible to ignore and the desire to deny events that are too painful to speak."[180]

179 "Relying on the power of accretion, lists of the Fifteen Signs pile catastrophe on catastrophe in quick succession. In doing so, they aim to elicit both fear and pity." Gayk, "Apocalyptic Ecologies," 6.

180 *Death and the Pearl Maiden*, 6.

Apocalyptic urgency was felt widely in late medieval England. The popular dimension and character of apocalypticism in this age is apparent as the various ideas about the end of an age, the nature of power, and the need for direct biblical engagement (in some ways in competition with the sacramental system) testify to the power of literacy taking hold in England and the very real fears that current ways of living were not sustainable. The English population's varying degrees of literacy (in different languages) and the idiosyncrasies of individuals help to explain that notions of the apocalyptic necessarily take as many forms as there are those engaging with them. Thus, an age of popular apocalyptic thinking at least tangentially tied to Wyclif needs to be acknowledged.

As our understanding of Wyclif, Wycliffism, and the Wyclif-ish continues to develop, we will not only fine-tune our understandings of the dynamics of religious thought and behavior in this period; we will have a better sense of the hope as well as the animosity that comes with apocalypticism of various kinds. And only if we continue to grow in our understanding of how belief and doubt, adherence, and resistance, factored into the texts that survive and affected their readers, can we see these texts as connected to lives, as more than objects of a taxonomic exercise or parts of a tidy narrative. The apocalypticism of late medieval England is seen in the messy, in the uncertain, and in the time whose bounds individual persons cannot quite figure out. Interestingly enough, the shifting variables and the moving targets in our study of it are in some ways parallel to what people experienced then. But however long one defines the Age of Wyclif with its sense of urgency – whether one limits it to the last few decades of the 14th century through Netter's attacks in the 1420s, or whether one imagines long trajectory of Lollardy, along with Bostick, "through the fifteenth century and into the reign of Henry VIII,"[181] what we see and what we struggle to see connect us a little more with persons and ideas that would otherwise be unduly forgotten.

What is clear from this age of ideas owing to Wyclif, those imputed to him, and those tangential or parallel to his ideas, is that contested practices such as teaching, writing, and translation – not to mention various fine points of theology – affected how laypersons understood their relationship to Christianity, their role in society, and their place in history. The individuals processing these apocalyptic narratives and trying to line them up with their perception and experience had more of an effect on the period's apocalypticism than has been generally appreciated.

181 Bostick, 178.

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CHAPTER 6

Antichrist in Prague

Eleanor Janega

The popular reform preacher Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, known throughout medieval Europe as Milicius, died in Avignon in 1374, bringing to a close a remarkable career which remains a subject of interest to this day.[1] From 1363, Milíč was as an outspoken and prolific critic of the state of Christendom. Leaving behind a successful career in the imperial chancery in Prague, he took up a life of asceticism and dedicated himself to inspiring renewal within the Church. He claimed that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that the moral decay of the clergy and society was allowing for the advent of Antichrist. Milíč believed that the best way to reform a sinful and compromised society was to warn people directly through preaching. Determined to halt the coming of the Man of Sin, Milíč duly busied himself with preaching in the imperial capital. By all accounts, he had a noteworthy talent for oration and was sought after enough that he preached up to five times a day in various locations. In addition to his preaching practice, he also founded a home for preachers and repentant sex workers in a former Prague brothel, which he called Jerusalem. As his work continued his reputation spread with rapidity throughout the Holy Roman Empire after he compiled and collected two well-circulated collections of sermons, *Abortivus* and *Gratia Dei*. Their popularity in the 14th and 15th centuries is attested to by the impressive survival rate and the geographic range over which the collections are still found.[2]

The message that the preacher delivered to Prague's crowds was one of unremitting pessimism. The sermons warned audiences that the world was then in its third and final phase, and that the advent of Antichrist was upon it.[3] In these earlier stages of his preaching career, preoccupied as he was with

1 For more on the life of Milíč, see František Loskot, *Milíč z Kroměříže: Otec české reformace* (Prague: 1911), 15–16; Miloslav Kaňák, *Milíč z Kroměříže: Na českých překladech z Milíčova díla spolupracoval Karel Červený* (Prague: 1975).

2 The manuscripts of both sermon collections are found in modern day Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and as far afield as Sweden. See Pavel Spunar (ed.), *Repertorium Auctorum Bohemorum Provectum Idearum Post Universitatem Pragensem Conditam Illustrans*, Tomus I (Wrocław: 1985), 171–192.

3 Peter C.A. Morée has written a detailed account of the most likely dates for the composition of Milíč's sermons in his *Preaching in Fourteenth-century Bohemia: The Life and Ideas of*

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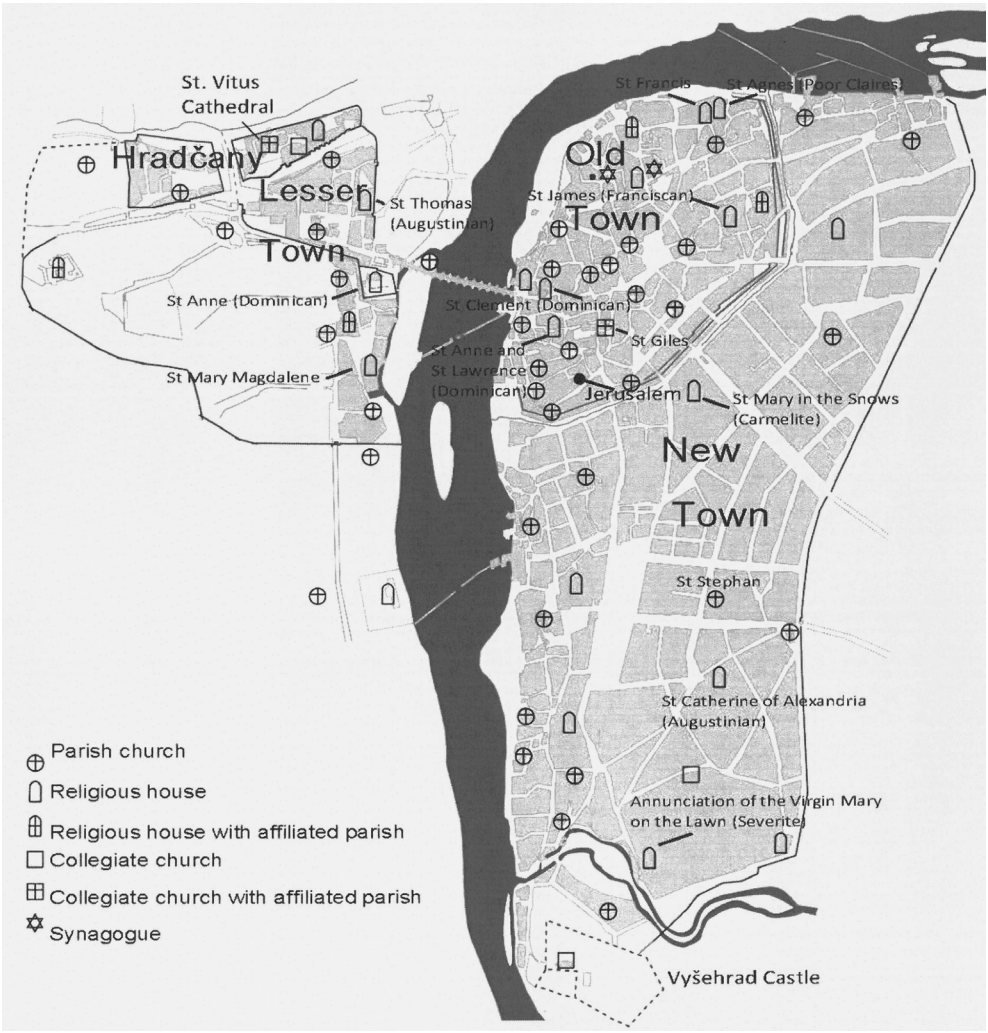

MAP 6.1 Map of Prague
© ELEANOR JANEGA

the End Times, Milíč was like many other preachers involved in Antichrist prediction. After attaining some fame in Prague he had prognosticated that the Final Enemy would come either in 1365 or 1367.

While his eschatological preaching made Milíč a favorite in Prague, and sparked interest across the Empire, it also attracted ire. He first faced serious

Milicius de Chremsir (+1374) *and His Significance in the Historiography of Bohemia* (Slavkov: 1999).

theological opposition in 1367, when he travelled to Rome where he hoped to meet with Pope Urban V, who was travelling there from Avignon. He was arrested by a cardinal subsequent to nailing a sermon about Antichrist to the door of St. Peter's where he intended to deliver it the next day.[4] Thanks to the sympathetic intervention of the pope's brother, Cardinal Angel (also known as Angelic) de Grimoard (ca. 1315–1388), a great lover of reformers, the preacher was released upon the pontiff's arrival in Rome.[5]

Milíč returned home to Prague soon thereafter and once again took up preaching and continued to deliver eschatological sermons. He would even return to Rome in 1369 in a further attempt to convince the pope of the imminent coming of Antichrist. Regardless of his continued preoccupation with the End Times, he would not stray into the controversial practice of Antichrist prediction again. Meanwhile, his popularity in Prague continued to grow and he became the primary preacher at St. Giles church in Prague's Old Town [Staré Město] (See Map 6.1). From 1371 to 1372 Milíč produced his second sermon collection, *Gratia Dei*, and the fame that he had attracted from his preaching allowed him to undertake yet more ambitious projects.[6] By the year 1372 he had begun the project for which he would be best known, his religious community called Jerusalem. The group began in the house of one former madam, presumably swayed from her life as a brothel-keeper by the preacher. It would go on to inhabit the houses of several former such businesses, in Prague's "worst and most horrible neighborhood."[7]

Jerusalem grew at a rapid pace, attracting repentant sex workers who were seeking a way out of their circumstances, as well as aspiring preachers eager

4 "Et quam cito annexa fuerat litera ostii s. Petri, statim quaerebant, ubi esset; … et quam cito fuit inventus, statim fuit per inquisitorem de ordine Praedicatorum arrestatus."

"And as soon as the letter had been attached to St Peter's door, they immediately sought where he [Milíč] was; … and as soon as he was found, he was immediately arrested by the inquisitor of the Order of Preachers," Josef Emler (ed.), *Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii, praelati ecclesiae Pragensis*, hereafter *Vita*, in, *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, hereafter *FRB*, vol. 1 (Prague: Musea království Českého, 1871–1873), 411.

5 On Cardinal Angel de Grimoard, and Milíč's release from prison, see Ladislav Klicman, "Milíč, Jan", in *Ottův slovník naučný* [Otto's Educational Dictionary], vol. XVII (Prague: 1901), 339, and Loskot, *Milíč*, 75.

6 This study accepts Morée's contention regarding the dating of Milíč's sermons. See Morée, *Preaching*, 101–102.

7 "… videlicet vicum illum pessimum et horrendum, qui dicebatur 'Venecie', utique a Venere nuncupate, et in linguagio boemico 'Benatky'."

"… that is to say, that worst and most horrendous neighborhood, which was called 'Venice,' of course named after Venus, and in the Bohemian language, 'Benatky'." See Matej of Janov, *Narracio de Myliczyo*, in, Matěj of Janov, *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, hereafter *RVNT*, ed. Vlastimil Kybal, vol. III (Innsbruck: 1911), 362.

to work alongside the popular Milíč. Eventually the community had become large and influential enough that it took over the house of the city's most prominent brothel, Venice [Benátky]. It was at this point that new legal challenges began to arise for the preacher. In 1373 two of Milíč's students were accused, in January and April respectively, of having slandered prelates in their sermons. They were forced to discontinue their preaching until their cases were heard in front of the archiepiscopal court.

Later that year, a group of mendicants and clergy members from Prague lodged a series of complaints against the preacher at the papal court.[8] The accusations attested that: 1) In 1366, Milíč affirmed that the Antichrist had been born; 2) He preached that individuals involved in real estate and money trading were damned and should be driven from the community of the faithful; 3) He claimed that for clergy to receive rental income from houses or lands was usury; 4) He proclaimed that it was necessary for the salvation of everyone, including the laity, to receive communion at least twice a week, or even every day; 5) He ordered daily or twice-weekly communion as a form of penance; 6) The members of the Jerusalem community, both male and female wore habits. Furthermore, women were prevented from leaving the houses of Jerusalem, and were beaten for perceived transgressions; 7) After Milíč's application to have the chapel at the Jerusalem community raised to a parish church was rejected, 'he rose and publicly preached that there was no truth in the pope, cardinals, bishops, prelates, parish priests, the religious, and other priests, and that none of them would lead to the truth of life'; 8) After being told that he could be excommunicated because the Jerusalem community constituted a new religious order, Milíč responded that if the pope excommunicated him, the emperor would defend him; 9) He preached that the study of the liberal arts was a deadly sin, and that students studying them were heretics; 10) He preached against women wearing even modest ornamentation, and once even snatched and destroyed a garland worn on the head of a young woman attending one of his sermons; 11) Milíč had proclaimed that he had done more to turn people toward Christ than Jesus himself. Moreover, if his efforts were frustrated, they would still be accomplished by 'the hands of the princes and the powers of the secular arm'; 12) He preached that priests should only hold property in common.

In response, on 14 January 1374, papal bulls were sent out to the Archbishop of Prague as well as to the bishops of neighboring dioceses, demanding that

8 František Palacký (ed.), *Über Formelbücher: Zunächst in Bezug auf böhmische Geschichte*, vol. II (Prague: 1842–1847), 183–184. Loskot has postulated that the accusations were formulated before the end of 1373. See, Loskot, *Milíč*, 93.

Milíč's preaching be stopped.[9] Pope Gregory XI (1329–1378) also sent a letter to Emperor Charles IV (1316–1378) in which he commanded the ruler to intervene.[10] Milíč had little choice but to defend himself at the papal court and thus took himself to Avignon where he would die.

Clearly then, Milíč faced opposition from others in the clergy. Yet the drama that surrounded him has long overshadowed the ideas which attracted it, and the work that he was able to undertake in Prague as a result of his popularity. The rate at which Milíč's and his work were condemned, and a historiographical tendency to view all late medieval Czech reformers as part of an unbroken succession culminating with the Hussites, has led to a common view of the preacher as an outspoken radical marching inevitably toward the Hussite rebellion.[11]

This conception began to assert itself in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a part of the Czech national revival [*České národni obrození*].[12] This movement sought to distance the Czech and Slovak lands from what were considered to be the negative forces of the imperial context and emphasized the cultivation of Czech language and culture. It was the works of this period which declared that Milíč was "a great and lasting force in the Czech nation".[13] Even those working outside the Czech lands seemed to concur. R.R. Betts, for example, agreed that Milíč resented secular authority.[14]

More recently, Milíč's life and work has again become a subject of interest for historians. Mengel for example, has investigated Milíč's influence on the religious topography of 14th-century Prague, as well as exposing one of Milíč's biographies as a repurposed hagiography of Bernard of Clairvaux.[15]

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9 Palacký (ed.), *Über Formelbücher*, vol. II, 182.

10 Odoricus Raynaldus (ed.), *Annales Ecclesiastici ab anno quo desinit Card. C. Baronius: 1198 usque 1534*, vol. XVI (Cologne: 1691), 526.

11 For more on this tendency, and its folly, see Olivier Marin, "The Early Bohemian Reform," in *A Companion to the Hussites*, ed. Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup (Leiden: 2020), 25–62, especially 49–51.

12 On the Czech National Revival, see Jíří Kořalka, *Tschechen im Habsburgreich und in Europa 1815–1914* (Vienna: 1991); Josef Kočí, *České národní obrození* (Prague: 1978); Tomáš Masaryk, *Česká otázka: Snahy a tužby národního obrození* (Prague: 1895).

13 Vlastimil Kybal, "Magister Matěj z Janova a Magister Jakoubek z Stříbra: Srovnáci Kapitola o Antichristu" [Master Matěj of Janov and Master Jakoubek of Stříbro, Comparative Chapters on Antichrist], *Ceskšý Casopis Historickšý* [The Czech Historical Magazine] 11 (1905), 22–37.

14 R.R. Betts, "Some Political ideas of the Czech Reformers," in *Essays in Czech History* (London: 1969), 69.

15 See in particular, David Charles Megel, "From Venice to Jerusalem and Beyond: Milíč of Kroměříž and the Topography of Prostitution in Fourteenth-century Prague," *Speculum* 79 (2004), 407–442, and "A Monk, a Preacher, and a Jesuit: Making the Life of Milíč," in *The*

Meanwhile, the preacher's generalized sermon output and historiographical legacy was examined and analyzed by Moreé.[16] Kalashnikova, meanwhile, has worked on evaluating Milíč's ability to change sermon genres depending on audience, as well as his possible Joachimite influence.[17] Hana Vlhová-Wörner has worked on the preacher's use of Last Judgement tropes.[18] Marin has also written about the preacher's place in the early reform movements in Bohemia, and its role as a "counter-reformation" in response to Waldensian influences in southern Bohemia.[19] This chapter will build on this recent research, and aims to show that while Milíč's eschatological beliefs are certainly interesting, when they are examined they fail to give a clear picture of the firebrand radical his contemporaries warned about. Instead, it would seem that his impact on the religious topography of Prague, and subsequently on the donations that various groups received, as well as his antipathy towards other members of the clergy, was perhaps a more pressing motivator for his denunciation. Such a study will allow for a greater understanding of a thriving and capital which was home to a rich and varied range of beliefs.

1 Milíč's Eschatological Beliefs

Like other medieval thinkers, Milíč saw the events of his time as being expressions of Antichrist's looming advent. As such, he made extensive use of Antichrist application, defined by McGinn as "a conscious and concentrated effort … to understand historical events, recent and contemporary, in the light of the Antichrist legend as part of an apocalyptic view of history", to point to what he saw as the issues within the Church and society and warn others of the

Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice, vol. 5.1. ed. Zdeněk V. David and David R. Holeton (Prague: 2004), 33–47.

16 Moreé, *Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia*.

17 Olga Kalashnikova, "The Father of the Bohemian Reformation: Iohannes Milicus de Cremsir's 'Ars praedicand'." *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 25 (2019), 79–92; Olga Kalashnikova, "Apocalypticism and Theology of Church Moral Reform in Bohemia under Charles IV: The Case of Cola di Rienzo and Milíč of Kroměříž," in *Volume of the 10th Jubilee Conference of Junior Theologians and Doctoral Students* (Budapest: 2020).

18 Hana Vlhová-Wörner, "*Cum tuba praedicationis et voce magna*: Tropes about the Last Judgement in Pre-Reformation Bohemia," in *Dies est Leticie: Essays on Chant in Honour of Janka Szendrei*, ed. David Hiley and Gábor Kiss (Ottawa: 2008), 501–528.

19 See, for example, Marin, "The Early Bohemian Reform," 31; See also his *La Réforme commence à Prague: Histoire des hussites XVE–XXE siècle* (Paris: Passés composés / Humensis, 2021), especially 72–81.

dangers they represented.[20] As a part of this, he wrote a detailed biography of the Antichrist, which adhered to most standard medieval conventions, with a few notable exceptions. The first of these exceptions was a belief that when the Antichrist came to power, Jewish people will begin to follow him, and "receive crowns and repossess their synagogues" in reward for their loyalty.[21] He will then begin to convert the Christians through false miracles, and recruit false prophets to his cause. These followers will in turn receive the ability to speak in tongues through communion with an evil spirit in a parody of the Apostles' union with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.[22] This supposition seems to be an invention of Milíč's own, as he cites no authorities for the idea, nor is there a record of a popular idea of such an event in other medieval sources. Milíč further attested that Antichrist will bribe by many gifts of gold and silver[23] those who are not seduced by his miracles and false prophets. Those who remain unconvinced he will bring round through torture, an idea which he validated by the Gloss on Matthew 24:21.[24]

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20 Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: 1994), 120–121.

21 "Consequenter cum triginta annis regnum huius mundi sibi potenter usurpabit et secundum Johannem ad dimidum quartum annum regnabit; tunc soluti erunt Iudei, qui modo isunt clausi, et acceptabunt coronas et rehabebunt synagoga et de omnibus climatibus ad eum current et eum verum deum et Messiam tunc venisse putantes."

"Thereafter when in thirty years he usurps the kingdom of this world to himself with power and according to John will reign for three years and a half, then the Jews will be freed who are now confined and they will receive crowns and repossess their synagogues and from all parts of the world they will run to him, thinking that he is the true god and that the Messiah has then come."

Milíč, "Sermo de Die Novissimo Domini", hereafter "Sermo", in Milan Opočenský and Jana Opočenská (eds.), *The Message for the Last Days: Three Essays from the Year 1367* (Geneva: 1998), 36, 37.

22 "Et ignem faciet descendere de celo coram hominibus, seducens et multa alia signa (faciens), et prophete dabunt signa, quod itae et in nomine ipsius Antichristi spiritus malignus faciet descendere super suos ita, ut loquetir variis linguas …".

"And he will make fire to descend from heaven before men, leading them astray and doing many other signs, and prophets will give signs, that thus in the name of Antichrist himself also the evil spirit will cause to come down upon his own in this way, so that he will speak in diverse tongues …". Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, "Libellus de Antichristo", hereafter "Libellus", in Opočenský and Opočenská (eds.), *The Message* 36, 37.

23 "Seducet et avaros per multa munera auri et argenti." "He will lead the greedy astray also by many gifts of gold and silver." Ibid.

24 "Glosa: 'Et hoc tempore Antichristi crebra et multa et acerrima tormenta inferentus fidelibus christianis;'"

"The Gloss: 'And in the time of Antichrist many and harsh torments will be brought upon faithful Christians;'" Ibid.

It is at this point that Milíč believed Enoch and Elias will begin their work, though he gave no time frame for their ministry. Instead, Milíč focused on their inevitable deaths at the order of Antichrist. At this point, Milíč's Antichrist biography once again deviates from the standard narrative. Most Antichrist narratives in general believed that the Man of Sin would make an immediate attempt to ascend into heaven on the Mount of Olives, whereupon he would be struck down by 'the Spirit of Christ's mouth', and be defeated. Milíč, in contrast, contended that it was after the death of the prophets that the final enemy would "go to Jerusalem and … storm that Temple of the Lord."[25] Then, at the behest of his Jewish followers, he would repair the temple and insert himself within it for worship.[26] Only then would Milíč's Antichrist become convinced that he could ascend into heaven. Upon attempting to do so, however, he would instead be pressed into the mountain by the weight of his sins and then be killed by St. Michael on the orders of Christ. Milíč also seems to have believed that following Antichrist's demise there would be a period given over for the spiritual renewal of the deceived. He was unable, however, to settle on a time frame for this, citing the discrepancies between Jerome's prediction that the period would last for fifteen days, as well as the more oft predicted forty-five days.[27]

Also unique to Milíč was a theory of the ages of man which he developed, much as other exegetes such as St. Ambrose, Joachim of Fiore, and Hildegard of Bingen did, using two methods to explain the organization of time and thereby demonstrate the veracity of the coming of Antichrist.[28] He put forward his own time division in his sermon collection *Gratia Dei*, where he used Luke 12:37–38

25 "Postea Antichristius ibit in Ierusalem et expugnabit Templum Domini …" "Afterward, Antichrist will go to Jerusalem and will storm the temple of the Lord …" Milíč, "Sermo", 38, 39.

26 "Tunc dicet Iudeis: 'Quid amplius debeo vobis facere?' … Tunc Iudei respondent: 'Domine, templum nostrum deves reparare et legem nostram exaltare.'"

"Then he will say to the Jews, 'What more must I do to you?' … Then the Jews will reply, 'You must rebuild our temple, Lord, and exalt our law.' …" Ibid.

27 "Temporis autem illius non habemus certitudinem, quod plus duraret ante quindecim dies, quos Ieronimus in annalibus invenit, nisi quadraginta quinque dies, si autem plus, ignoratur."

"But we do not have certainty about that time, whether it would last longer before the fifteen days, which Jerome found in the annals – forty-five days or more – it is not known." Milíč, "Sermo", 40, 41.

28 On Joachim's divisions of time see, Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame, London: 1993), 16–25. On Hildegard's, see Hildegard of Bingen, *Book of Divine Works*, Book 3.10, in, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. Migne, vol. 197 (Paris: 1855), 997–1038. For more on Milíč and Joachimism see Klaishnikova, "Apocalypticism and Theology of Church Moral Reform".

to argue that the world would experience three eras before Doomsday, based upon the vigils of the three servants in the passages. The first era he termed the "vigil of natural laws" which began with creation and ended with the birth of Moses; the next the "vigil of Moses's laws" until the time of Jesus's coming; then the final era, the "vigil of evangelical laws", commenced.[29] Milíč sought to lend further credence to his system both by its exegetical basis, and its correspondence to the ages of man: childhood, youth, and old age.[30]

One need not, however, believe in the time sequences that Milíč advanced to come to the conclusion that the last era was underway. Rather, to Milíč's mind the greatest proof of this fact could be found in the wickedness of man (which he found in abundance), as well as the multiple tragedies of the 14th century.[31] That the reign of Antichrist was imminent was apparent to Milíč, who stressed in his sermons that "the Church [was] being pushed through the seventh and last generation of the peace of Christ … because the last hour [was] here and it [was] the end of ages."[32]

This conviction spurred Milíč on to perhaps his most famous exegetical achievement: his attempt to calculate the time of Antichrist's coming. This the preacher attempted to divine using the number of days mentioned in some of the visions of the Book of Daniel.[33] Milíč claimed that the Holy Spirit had inspired him to attempt these predictions, in which he considered that each day of the 1290 days of the abomination of desolation and 1335 days which the blessed would endure should be counted as a year. He then identified the beginning of the abomination of desolation with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which he believed occurred in 75 CE, and then added the 1290

29 See Milíč, St. Nicolaus, *Gratia Dei*, hereafter *GD*, Národní knihovna České republiky MS XIV.D.5, fol. 13r.

30 "… pueritie, iubentutis et senectutis vigilaverunt."
"… they watched in childhood, youth, and old age." Ibid.

31 "Ecce, in omni parte mundi aut gwerra aut pestilencia aut fames, et jam in totum populum ira Dei desevit." See, in every part of the world "here is war, or pestilence, or famine, and now the anger of God rages against the whole people." Milíč, 'Ad Papam Urbanum V', in Opočenský and Opočenská (eds.), *The Message*, hereafter "Ad Papam Urbanum", 26, 27.

32 "Ita nunc ecclesia septima et ultima generatione rapiatur in pace Christi, tenens iustitiam, ambulans cum Deo sicut Enoch et zelans pro lege Domini ut Helias, quia hora novissima est et Consumatio seculi." "So now the church is raptured in the seventh and last generation in the peace of Christ, holding righteousness, walking with God like Enoch and zealous for the law of the Lord like Helias, because it is the last hour and the consummation of the age." "Dominica XII post Trinitatus", in, Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, *Abortivus*, hereafter *A*, Národní knihovna České republiky MS I.D.37, fol. 234v.

33 The time frames in question can be found in Daniel 12:11–13.

years to reach the year 1365.[34] The 1335 days, however he calculated from the passion of Christ, and reached the year 1367.[35] Those who had survived to the present year, Milíč proclaimed to be blessed. It was these survivors who would be lucky enough to undergo torment at the hands of Antichrist, and therefore be given the opportunity to suffer for their faith. This seems to imply that Milíč believed that Antichrist had already been in the world by the year 1365, but that his power increased in the year 1367, and his torments were therefore soon to begin.

The signs of the approach of Antichrist, and resultant End of Time, were manifold to Milíč, and began within the very organization which ought to be resisting the Man of Sin. The Church, as Milíč saw it, was beset from within by "many who seem to be Christians [but] do more harm to the Church than pagans, and create many Antichristian abominations."[36] These false Christians degraded the Church at every level of the hierarchy, a clear sign that "The abomination of desolation and of the awful Antichrist has come."[37]

The issues began with the cardinals, whom Milíč called "the partners of thieves"[38] and whom he claimed in his letter to Pope Urban V were neglecting their roles within the Church.[39] The numerous sins being committed by these princes of the Church were proof to the preacher that they were under the

34 Milíč "Libellus", 60. The destruction of the temple is held by most historians to have occurred in AD 70, rather than 75. See, for example, John M. Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future* (London, Westport CT: 2008), 101.

35 Milíč, "Libellus", 60.

36 "Periculosoria enim sunt tempora quam tunc fuerunt, cum multi qui videntur esse christani, magis noceant ecclesie quam pagani, multas abominationes antichristianas facientes. Caveamus ergo nobis sicut cavet nobis beatus Ambrosius super Lucam, libero decimo, capitulo secundo, dicens: 'Abhominatio desolationis et exsecrabilis antichristi adcentus est.'"

"For the times are more dangerous than they were then, when many who seem to be Christians do more harm to the Church than the pagans, committing many antichristian abominations. Let us beware, then, as blessed Ambrose warns us in Luke, the tenth chapter, the second chapter, saying: 'The abomination of desolation and detestable antichrist.'" Milíč, "Sabato in quattuor temporibus", in, *GD*, XIV.D.5, fol. 25r.

37 Ibid.

38 "Principes Tui, socii furum, omnes diligunt munera, secuntur retributiones, pupillo non judicant et causa viduae, videlicet ecclesiae sanctae, non ingreditur ad eos."

"Your princes, the partners of thievs all love gifts, pursue revenge, fail to give justice to the orphan, and the cause of the widow, that is, the holy church, does not come before them."

Milíč, "Ad Papam Urbanum V", 18, 19.

39 "Qui videlicet hereticos non exterminant, clericos symoniace ordinant, symoniace consecrant ecclesias, calices, ornata etc. pro pretio sive pacto, concubinarios presbyteros etiam quidam ex eis pro pecuniis stare permittunt, usuarios ita fovent, ut quidam ex eis

sway of the devil, and paving the way for Antichrist.[40] The dangerous condition of the Church was further exacerbated by the sins of the bishops, who, the preacher claimed, were chosen by local tyrants as pets to fill empty episcopal positions. As a result the vacancies were filled not "according to canon law, but [instead] the choice or preferment [was] made by begging favour, by money, by bloodshed".[41] The Church in this way lost the ability to critique the actions of local authorities, as the bishops owed their very livelihoods to them.[42] They neglected their duties, doing little more than reading their masses, and committed "the crime of hypocrisy and simony".[43] To this end, Milíč alleged that they hounded their subjects if they did not provide "something towards their personal expenses"[44] in exchange for the barest of pastoral functions.

Milíč saw the entire Church's hierarchy as under siege from perfidious members, and that the resultant discord within the Church threatened Christianity as a whole.[45] He felt that soon "the whole machinery of the Church [would]

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indulserunt in suis dyoecesibus decem marcas pro una concedi usque ad restitutionem pecuniae capitalis. … non pascunt gregem suum nec visitant …"

"They of course do not banish heritics, ordain clergy simoniancally, consecrate churches, chalices, ornaments, etc. simoniancally, for money or through a bargain; some of them even allow concubinary priests to remain in office for money; they so support the usurious that some have allowed ten marks of interest for one until the repayment of the capital sum in their own diocese. … they do not feed their flock or visit them …" Ibid., 20, 21.

40 "Vide, cujus manus sit extenta! Quis est, qui promittit fovenda in terra sua haereticos habitare, similiter et usarios et adulteros?"

"See whose hand is stretched out! Who is it who by his favour sends forth heretics to dwell in his land, and likewise usurers and adulterers." Ibid., 18, 19.

41 "Certe, quia raro aliquis canonice eligitur, sed vel eligitur vel assumitur prece, pretio, carne, et ut plurimum, qui valet pro adulatione, ille eligitur principe suo."

"Certainly the reason is that it is rare for anyone to be chosen according to canon law, but the choice or preferment is made by begging favour, by money, by bloodshed, and for the most part he who is strong by adulation is chosen by his prince." Ibid., 22, 23.

42 "… ymo se eis potius substernentes velud sacerdotes Pharaonis. … tanto sunt nequiores effecti, quanto sunt tyrannis familiariores …" "… prostrating themselves to them like the priests of the Pharaoh … they become the more sinful the closer they are to the tyrants." Ibid., 20, 21.

43 Ibid.

44 "Cum pardicaverint, missas legarint, confessiones audierint, sacramenta porrexerunt, arbitrantur se obsequium praestare Deo, cum tamen minus receprint, quod si quis non dederit quippam in os eorum, magnificant contra eum prelium."

"For when they have preached, read masses, heard confessions and administered the sacraments they think they give obedience to God, but if they receive less because someone does not put something towards their personal expenses, they raise war against him." Ibid., 22, 23, 24.

45 "Si christiani inter se divisi sunt, perit christianitas. Non in bonis religiosis et magistris sed malis …"

be corrupted by the poison of abomination and hypocrisy."[46] This would lead to a crisis in guidance for the laity, with unworthies providing insufficient or incorrect pastoral care.[47] Milíč worried that the clergy members serving Antichrist through their deeds would impart heretical or sinful messages to their audiences, and that their inadequate moral preparedness would thereby swell the ranks of Antichrist's followers for …

> as one enters through the good teachers as through the gates of Zion the heavenly Jerusalem, so one is allowed to enter the eternal confusion of hell through evil teachers, through the gates of Babylon.[48]

Milíč's apparent concern with the breakdown of order and hierarchy as a sign of Antichrist seems also to apply to another cited cause of the End Times – the dissolution of the Empire. Milíč concurred with the idea that the Roman Empire, and in this case the Holy Roman Empire, was the restraining force which holds back Antichrist. He argued this point by attesting that "[According to] the second Gloss, the Lord will not come to judgment, unless separation first comes, i.e. unless the nations leave Roman rule."[49] This separation necessary to release Antichrist had, according to Milíč, already occurred, and

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"If Christians are divided among themselves, Christianity perishes. Not in good religious and teachers but in bad ones …" Milíč, "Dominica III in XL", in, *GD*, XIV.D.5, fol. 119r.

46 "… tota ecclesiae machina veneno abhomacionis et yppocrisis corrumpetur."

"… the whole fabric of the church will be corrupted by the poison of abomination and hypocrisy." Milíč, "Ad Papam Urbanum V", 28, 29.

47 "Sic quidquid sacerdoces secundum ineffabilem modum sibi tradite potestatis operantur, solus Deus illa facit in eis et per eos …"

"Thus, whatever the priests – according to the indescribable method of power – traditionally work for themselves, God alone does that in them and through them …" Milíč, "St. Petrus", in *GD*, Národní knihovna České republiky MS XII.D.1, fol. 42v.

48 "Sicut einm per bonor doctores quasi per portas Syon ad celestem Jherusalem intratur, sic per malos doctores tamquam per portas Babilonie ad confusionem eternam inferni patet ingressus."

"Just as one through good teachers enters as if through the gates of Zion to the heavenly Jerusalem, so through bad teachers one enters into the eternal confusion of hell as through the gates of Babylon." Milíč, "St. Petrus", in Ibid., fol. 40v. See also, "Sicud einm per bonos doctores quasi per portas Syon as celestem Jherusalem subintratur, sicsic per portas Babylon [sic], id est falsos doctores, ad infernum patet ingressus."

"As he entered the heavenly Jerusalem through the good teachers, as through the gates of Zion, so through the gates of Babylon [sic], that is, through the false teachers, he clearly entered into hell." Milíč, "Dominica V post T", in, *A*, fol. 155v.

49 "Secundum Glosam non veniet Dominus ad iudicium, nisi prius venerit discessio i.e. nisi prius gentes discedant a Romano imperio …"

"According to the Gloss the Lord will not come to judgement, unless the separation first cimes, i.e. unless the nations first leave Roman rule …" Milíč, "Sermo", 34, 35.

he bemoaned that "the Empire is so divided and is being divided daily" and that "… the Empire of the Romans [has] been split into more kingdoms and empires."[50]

Again, it is clear that Milíč felt that the abnegation from the duties due to a hierarchical system was allowing for the advent of Antichrist in this instance. To his way of thinking, when territories left the Empire, or withheld their duties to it, they took away the ability of the institution to protect against the coming of the Man of Sin by defending the Church. They therefore exacerbated the issues within the Church and "the persecution of the alliance which it suffered for so many years."[51] The Empire existed, in Milíč's opinion, to order the secular powers of the world and channel them into support for the divine work of the Church. To ignore this structure was therefore tantamount to ignoring the faith and the Church and inviting Antichrist into the world.

It was obvious to Milíč that when deprived of proper moral leadership either from the clergy, rulers, or the hierarchical structures which were created to order and guide society, the conditions necessary for Antichrist to come were created. It was clear to him that the End Times were upon the world. He pointed to the several plagues, famines, and wars then underway in Europe, which he considered Jesus had warned of in the book of Matthew to make his point, and that they were a result of God's dissatisfaction with the world.[52] Further, God intended the catastrophes to be experienced in two different ways by members of society. For the sinful, the hardships were intended as punishments for their involvement in creating the environment which Antichrist would take power in. The faithful, however, were to view these trials as reminders to adhere to the Christian faith and stand up to the Man of Sin and his followers.[53] Thus these

50 "Ex quo ita distractum est, et cottidie distrahitur, quod dominus Imperator non possit ex eo panem habere, nisi haberet de Bohemia. Et quomodo in plura regna et imperia divisum est imperium Romanorum?" "For the Empire is so divided and is being divided daily, the our lord the Emperor cannot have bread from it, unless he has it from Bohemia. And how has the Empire of the Romans been split into more kingdoms and empires?" Milíč, "Libellus". Ibid., 68, 69.

51 Ibid.

52 Supra in eodem ca [Mt 24] (v. 3) … "Audituri enim estis prelia et sediciones; consurget enim gens contra gentem et regnum adversus regnum et terre motus erunt per loca, pestulencia et fames."

Above in the same chapter [Mt 24] (v. 3) … "For you will hear of wars and civil unrest; for nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be earthquakes here and there and epidemics and famines." Milíč, "Sermo", 32, 33.

53 "Tamen eam postea in multis periculis et plagis usque ad mortem viriliter est confessus, nos instruens, ut teneamus fidei nostre, confessionem indeclinabilem, non solum lingua, sed etiam opere et veritate, nam et si desunt tiranni, qui nos a fide avertant." "Nevertheless,

catastrophes were a simultaneous sign of the End Times, and a call to arms, by which God was able to punish wrong doers, and prepare his army for the moral battle to come.

As his works show, Milíč shared a belief in many of the common signs of Antichrist's coming. He believed that the End Times would be preceded by an increase in sinful behavior, a fracturing of both of the Roman Empire and Church, and a series of catastrophes which signaled God's displeasure with His creation. None of these ideas were extraordinary in and of themselves. The Bible warned of natural and political disasters, and an increase in wrongdoing before Antichrist's coming, while the Gloss regularly identified Rome as a restrainer of Antichrist. What is remarkable about Milíč's interpretation of these signs was his belief that they were all occurring at that very moment and were linked to specific groups of individuals, most of whom held positions of authority in the Church and the secular world.

When Milíč's concerns with the eschatological implications of the corruption of power are taken into account, his proposed course of action in fighting the coming of Antichrist is logical. He believed that the threat had to be fought through a series of reforms to be enacted at the highest possible level, that is, by the pope, and to a lesser extent, the emperor. Milíč believed that the pope, as leader of the Church, was not only possessed of the power necessary to guide the world in a time of crisis, but was also tasked with doing so, a conviction which he expressed to Pope Urban V (1310–1370) in 1367.[54] The Pope, he attested, was God's representative on earth. As such, Milíč found him capable of "stand[ing] between God and the people,"[55] and thereby delivering the world from His wrath.

To do so, he argued that the pontiff must convene a council in Rome, and command that all bishops attend. There the pope should confront them with the litany of abuses being perpetrated throughout the Church and the

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afterwards, in many perils and plagues, he manfully confessed it even to death, instructing us to hold to the unwavering confession of our faith, not only in tongue, but also in deed and truth, even if there are tyrants who turn us away from the faith." Milíč, "Kathedra St. Petri", in *A*, I D 37, fol. 57r.

54 "Cum autem aliis discipulis dicatur a Domino: 'Laxate rethe in captuarum,' Tibi soli dicit: 'Duc in altum rethe.' But when the Lord said to the other disciples: 'Loose your nets for the catch', to you alone he said: 'Draw your net into the dee'." Milíč, 'Ad Papam Urbanum V', 20, 21.

On the connection between these identifications and Joachmite theology, see Kalishnikova, "Apocalypticism and Theology of Church Moral Reform", 275–277.

55 "Tolle thuribulum cordis et imple igne ferventissime caritatis, et offer Te stans inter Deum et populum …" "Raise the censor of your heart and fill it with the fire of the most fervent love and present yourself, standing between God and the people …" Ibid., 26, 27.

Christian world and correct their errors.[56] In this way Milíč intimated that the Pope would be able to make up for the fact that the bishops had not been attending regular synods, where such instructions would have been imparted. Milíč also insisted that it was also necessary that "[the Pope] provide certain persons, religious and secular, to be sent to preach" against Antichrist.[57] He should also establish a sort of school or center for preachers, to ensure that he had control over the messages that were being propagated. These preachers, after receiving instruction, were then to be sent throughout Christendom to deliver a unified message of redemption, and in the course of their work would inspire others to preach the same message in their native lands.[58] If this group could be gathered, they would constitute an army in opposition to that of Antichrist, capable of overcoming him.[59]

As this plan was laid out in a letter to the pope, and an apologetical or defense of his doctrinal beliefs for the papal court, it is possible to interpret it as constructed for the benefit of a papal audience. Milíč's other sermons, however, reiterate what seems to be his ardent belief that while preachers must play the largest part in this theoretical movement against Antichrist, and that it was necessary that the message they delivered come from the pope. On several occasions Milíč informed his audience that in time of uncertainty preachers must seek advice and council from the pope. The preacher held that the pope was to be considered the master of the earth, in tandem with Christ,

56 "… quod aliter fieri non potest, nisi per concilium generale …"

"… that can only happen through a General Council." Ibid., 30, 31.

Also, "'Suade igitur summo pontifici, ut faciat *concilium generale* in Roma, in quo omnes episcopi accipiant modum corrigendi suos et suorum defectus …'"

"'Therefore persuade the holy pontiff to have a general council in Rome in which all bishops may receive ways of correcting their own and other people's failings …'" Milíč, "Libellus", 68, 69, 71.

57 "… et certas personas dent religiosas et seculares mitendas [ad praedicandum, quorum multi cum sint potentes in opere] et sermones fortes ut ambient lectulum Salomonis omen tentes gladius sermonum Dei …"

"… and provide certain persons, religious and secular to be sent to preach; of whom since many are brave in act and powerful in word, let them encircle the coffin of Solomon all holding the swords of the words of God …" Ibid., 70, 71.

58 "Hii facient passagium generale, aliis domi praedicantibus et pugnantibus, plus mori quam occidere parati pro Christo, hii vincent bestiam vel Antichristum propter sanguinem agni et securum accessum facient ad terram promisionis aeternae."

"These will make a general pathway, with others preaching and fighting at home, prepared rather to die for Christ than to kill; they will conquer the beast or Antichrist for the blood of the lamb will make secure the coming to earth of the eternal promise." Ibid.

59 Ibid.

and therefore the source from which all spiritual knowledge should come.[60] Because of his position, preachers should be able to ascertain from the pontiff six 'degrees of differentiation' which established, among other considerations for preachers, who should be preaching, the correct messages to be given in sermons, and the best ways of winning over audiences.[61] It is obvious then that Milíč possessed a genuine conviction that all preachers should be looking to the highest possible office for instruction, regardless of his own circumstances at the time of writing.

Because of his belief that spiritual power resided with the upper echelons of authority, Milíč also seems to have considered that the faithful could look to other leaders for guidance during the spiritual turmoil. The pope may have been the lord of the earth, but Milíč also intimated that preachers could also look to "someone who is in the unity and faith of the holy Church" when seeking moral instruction.[62] That someone was the other representative of Rome, the emperor. Milíč claimed that the Holy Spirit had commanded him

60 "Quid ergo faciendum nobis incumbit, nisi ire ad dominum terre, id est Christum et eius vicarium papam vel alium qui est in unitate et fide ecclesie sancte, et receipere ab ipso frumenta, que electos nutriant, frumenta, inquam, mandatorum Dei, ut sic possint venire ad septenarium premiorum."

"What, then, is incumbent upon us to do, but to go to the lord of the earth, that is to say, Christ and his vicar, the pope, or another who is in the unity and faith of the holy church, and receive from him the grains to nourish the elect, the grains, I say, of the commandments of God, that they may thus be able to come to the septenary of the first." Milíč, 'Dominica XII post Trinitatus', in *A*, fol. 233v.

61 "Per gradus differentione designatur que fuit in Petro … Primo, divisit in eo quasi quod foret licitum et quod illicitum predicabat. Secundo, deliberat cum quod foret expediens et quod non expediens dicebat. Tercio, erat in eo dispositio dum quod ordinatum et quod inordinatum esset dicebat. Quarto, erat in eo dispositio dum quod opportunum et quod inportunum esset distinguebat. Quinto, erat in eo modificatio dum quod moderatum et immoderatum foret persuadebat. Sexta erat in eo distincto dum quod utile et quod inutile esset hominibus consulebat."

"It is marked by the degree of differentiation which was in Peter … First, he divided in him, as it were, what was lawful and what was unlawful that he preached. Secondly, he deliberated when he said what was expedient and what was not expedient. Thirdly, there was a disposition in him when he said what was ordered and what was disordered. Fourthly, there was a disposition in him when he distinguished between what was appropriate and what was inappropriate. Fifthly, there was a modification in it, while it was persuasive that it should be moderate and immoderate. He was the sixth in distinguishing between what was useful and what was useless to men." Milíč, "Kathedra S. Petri", in Ibid., fol. 57v.

62 "… id est Christum et eius vicarium papam vel alium qui est in unitate et fide ecclesie …"

"… that is, Christ and his vicar, the pope, or another who is in the unity and faith of the church …" Milíč, 'Dominica XII post Trinitatus', in Ibid., fol. 233v.

to "'exhort the clergy and people to pray for our lord the pope and our lord the Emperor that they may thus order the holy church in things spiritual and temporal'."[63] Milíč believed that the emperor was also a representative of the earthly Church and should be involved with its rededication to reform. The preacher saw the Holy Roman Empire and the Church of Rome as two aspects of the same entity. If Rome were to be preserved, and the Antichrist's coming thwarted, both the leaders of the secular and spiritual arms of this restraining force must work to reorder Christian society.

Moreover, Milíč saw the emperor as a moral influence, possessed of making correct spiritual decisions in his own right. This was evidenced by the preacher's pointed mentions of Charles's repugnance of Avignon.[64] Milíč, quoting Pseudo-Chrysostom, insisted that it was moral character which determined spiritual authority. As a result, he found in Charles IV a suitable leader for the Church itself, and one who should be involved in the coming fight against Antichrist.[65] Therefore, while the pope was still the individual best suited to lead the Church into a new state of renewal, he ought to also consider his lay counterpart when he began to do so.

Milíč's approach to fighting Antichrist is, therefore, best characterized as one with a heavy reliance on hierarchical structures. If change was to come, then it had to be enacted at the highest level possible from the outset. The pope ought to work in tandem with the emperor to establish a new message. It was to be imparted on to the bishops, then onto parish priests, until ultimately it reached laypeople. At the same time, a centralized school for preachers to disseminate a reform message *en masse* should be formed. This was a top-down

63 "'… exhortaberis clerum et populum, ut orent pro domino nostro papa et pro domino nostro Imperatore, ut ordinent ita ecclesiam sanctam in spiritualibus et temporalibus …'"

"… exhort clergy and people to pray for our lord the pope and for our lord the Emperor that they may so order the holy church in things spiritual and things temporal …" Milíč, "Libellus", 58, 59, 61.

64 "… quo dominus Imperator sanctitatem de Avinione versus Almaniam deduxit volens eam, dispergere, ut narratur."

"… our lord the Emperor took His Holiness from Avignon towards Germany, wishing to lay it waste, as is said." Ibid., 60, 61.

65 "Videte ergo quomodo sedeatis super cathedrum. Quia non cathedra fecit sacerdotem, sed sacerdos Cathedrum, non locus sanctificat hominem, sed homo sanctificat locum. Non omnis sacerdos sanctus est, sed omnis sanctus sacerdos. … Hec Crisostomus videant ergo prelati ut bene viventes iuste iudicent et iniquitam dampnent."

"See then how you sit on the chair. Because the chair did not make the priest, but the priest made the chair, it is not the place that sanctifies the man, but the man sanctifies the place. Not every priest is holy, but every holy [man is a] priest. … Let them see this Chrysostom as the prelate, that they may judge justly those who live well, and condemn iniquity." Milíč, "Kathedra St. Petri", in *A*, fols. 58r–58v.

approach that allowed for those who Milíč saw as the two greatest powers in Christendom to establish a moral society, and to craft a unified vision for the Church. To Milíč, however, it was not that the centralized approach was the best way forward, but the only way. In his opinion the pope was granted his power in the Church because he was tasked with the moral guidance of the world. He must, therefore, be the catalyst for change if there was to be any hope for reform.

It is thus apparent that Milíč's views on the Apocalypse, while sometimes unique, were, in actuality, staid. He believed in both an historical Antichrist, and the multiple Antichrists which comprised his army, and based his arguments for both concepts on biblical exegesis, and common texts such as the Gloss. He argued that what he saw as a crisis of moral guidance in the clergy, along with a surge in sinful behavior, the breaking apart of the Holy Roman Empire, and a number of natural and medical disasters presaged the coming of the Man of Sin. Based on what he saw as the evidence for Antichrist's coming, he felt justified in attempting to predict the actual date of the event and claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit in his effort. This constituted Milíč's largest departure from accepted Antichrist theory, and yet was common enough that it was practiced by multiple medieval exegetes to little complaint. Finally, he believed that to overcome the forces of Antichrist, the leaders of the spiritual and secular Rome had to reform Christendom and send forth trained preachers to propagate this message. While unique, this idea was by its very nature rooted in the extant hierarchical Christian tradition, which looked to the Pope before all others. Milíč's major conceit here was to insist that the emperor could also be considered a source of moral authority. Yet, as conservative as Milíč's ideas may seem after an in-depth examination, the common historiographical conception of Milíč is in direct opposition to these findings.[66]

2 Milíč and Jerusalem

If Milíč's eschatological beliefs were somewhat staid, his influence on the world around him was not. In particular, his work at Jerusalem seemed to engender

66 See, for example, Winter's insistance that, "[m]an versteht jetzt aber auch, warum die Tschechen gerade heute wieder mit Recht stolz auf den Reformator, ja Revolutionär Militsch sind." ["… but now one understands why the Czechs are justifiably proud of the reformer, even the revolutionary Milíč."] Eduard Winter, *Frühhumanismus: Seine Entwicklung in Böhmen und deren europäischen Bedeutung für die Kirchenreformbestrebungen im 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1964), 101.

delight in the general public and at the imperial court, and enmity in Prague's clergy. Milíč founded Jerusalem in 1372 after successfully ministering to a number of sex workers, who duly "repented" of their sin. Beyond simple preaching ministry he often assisted the repentant by paying off any usurious debts they may have incurred in their line of work.[67] Milíč encouraged these women to either return to their families, marry, or find new work. However, Prague was an expensive city and those who could not immediately find new work needed assistance. This Milíč offered by the provision of housing and food, initially in two houses donated to the preacher by a kindred repentant Moravian brothel keeper named Katherine.[68]

Many of these women seem to have related to their conversions profoundly enough that they were not interested in a return to domesticity, and instead wished to devote themselves to a more religious life. Religious communities of repentant sex workers had a long tradition in medieval Europe and had given rise to holy orders such as the Magdalenes, who had a convent in Prague in the Lesser Town on the opposite side of the Vltava river from Jerusalem[69] (See Map 6.1). Despite the traditions of the order's foundation, Prague's Magdalenes were no longer a community of actual repentant by this time. Thus, those among Milíč's converts who wanted a religious life decided that the most expeditious way to do so was to stay with the preacher, becoming an unofficial community.

Most of our evidence for the lives of the women in Jerusalem comes from antagonistic sources, but it is most probable that women in Jerusalem did not venture out in to the city, given Milíč's disgust for religious women who were not enclosed.[70] As already mentioned, his opponents claimed that Jerusalem's

67 Debt was one of the most common reasons that sex workers took up the trade in 14th-century Prague. See John Martin Klassen, *The Nobility and the Making of the Hussite Revolution* (New York: 1978), 20; František Graus, *Chudina Městská v dobvě Předhusitské* [The Urban Poor in the Pre-Hussite Period] (Prague: 1949), 66–67.

68 On Katherine, who is described as "quaedam hospita illarum mullierum," ['some landlady of those women'] and her donation, see Emler (ed.), *Vita*, in *FRB*, Vol. I., 418.

69 For more on the Magdalenes and their work with prostitutes see Iwan Bloch, *Die Prostitution: Hanbuch der Gestamten Sexualwissenschaft in Einzeldarstellungen*, Band. 1 (Berlin: 1912), 820–821; Peter Schuster, *Das Frauenhaus: Städtische Bordelle in Deutschland (1350–1600)* (Paderborn: 1992), 139.

70 "Quidam manifeste servant concubinas in domo, quidam tonsuram non deferunt, quidam coronam sui capitis abscondunt, quidam cincinnos ex suis capillis contorquent, quidam balneantur, ut fulgeant in facie velud fucate mulieres, quidam resplendent in veste ut filie Babilonis composite, circumornate ut similitudo templi, ut sepulchra dealbata foris, intrinsecus autem plena sunt ossibus mortuorum, sic illi ab extra ornati sunt, pleni intus luxuria et fetore."

women wore a habit and suffered corporeal punishment if they did not live up to his stringent regulations.[71] The idea that there was a dress code is somewhat plausible, given that Milíč was vehemently against women's finery, generally.[72] In contrast, evidence for Milíč beating his community is scant and seems to rest on the word of his critics. We do know that if penitents left the community and tried to return to sex work the preacher would attempt to persuade them back to Jerusalem, however.[73] While life at Jerusalem was at least somewhat proscriptive it was nonetheless popular with those whose other options were sex work or marriage. Between eighty-three and two hundred women were cared for and housed at the community each day and, as Mengel has noted, even adjusting for hyperbole, these numbers made Jerusalem one of Prague's largest religious houses.[74]

Jerusalem was also home to a number of preachers working under Milíč who comprised the "*scola*" in what was later termed a "*scola et templum*".[75] Unlike the women of Jerusalem, these men were expected to preach throughout the city and seem to have done a noteworthy job both of doing so and, as already discussed, angering their fellow clergymen to the point of legal retribution.[76] When they were not busy provoking their fellow prelates, these men also worked copying Milíč's sermons.[77] According to the aggrieved

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"Some openly keep their concubines in the house, some do not shave their heads, some hide the crown of their heads, some twist the locks of their hair, some bathe, so that their faces shine like veiled women, some of them shine in garments like those of the daughters of Babylon; adorned all around like the similitude of a temple, as sepulchres, whited outside, but inside full of the bones of the dead, so they are adorned on the outside, full of lust and stench on the inside." Milíč, "Grex Perditus", in Národní knihovna České republiky, Prague MS I.E.20, fol. 188v., col. 2.

71 František Palacký, *Über Formelbücher zunächst in Bezug auf böhmische Geschichte*, vol. I (Prague: 1842), 183.

72 Milíč castigated women who dressed in a fine manner, inspiring many of the richer attendees at his sermons to cast off their jewelry and rich clothing. See Emler (ed.), *Vita*, in, *FRB*, vol. I, 406.

73 Jano, *Narracio de Myliczyo*, in, *RVNT*, vol. III, 361.

74 The earliest biography of Milíč, written by Janov, to be discussed below, claimed that Jerusalem consisted of two hundred women (Janov, *Narracio*, in, *RVNT*, vol. III, 362), whereas a later biography, the *Vita*, attests that the community totaled eighty-three people all together. See, Emler (ed.), *Vita*, in, FRB, vol. I, 420; Mengel, *Bones, Stones, and Brothels*, 252.

75 Janov, *Narracio*, in, *RVNT*, vol. III, 362. For the status of the preachers as clerics see Emler (ed.), *Vita*, in, FRB, vol. I, 421.

76 Ferdinand Tádra (ed.), *Soudní akta konsistoře pražské* (*Acta Judiciaria Consistorii Pragensis*) *Z rukopisů archivu kapitolního v Praze* [Court files of the Consistory of Prague, from the Manuscript Archive of the Chapterhouse in Prague], vol. I (Prague: 1899), 51.

77 Emler (ed.), *Vita*, in, *FRB*, vol. I, 416–417.

Prague clergy, these men, like the repentant sex workers, wore a habit, and the preacher referred to their life in Jerusalem as a "*vita apostolica*", and the community as a "*locum literatorum*".[78] Exactly what Jerusalem was is still a point of contention among scholars now, but it was nonetheless popular enough to garner donations and adherents from across the city.[79] Milíč brought in enough money to eventually buy some twenty-seven houses around that first donated by Katherine near Prague's most notorious brothel, the aforementioned Venice. Finally, the Emperor Charles IV himself became a patron, abolishing the "long established Venice brothel" and donating its newly vacant houses to Milíč.[80] There Milíč consecrated an altar the so-called prostitute saints Mary Magdalene, Afra of Augsburg, and Mary of Egypt. Later, on 19 September 1372 the archbishop blessed the new chapel's corner stone.[81] It was then that problems began in earnest.

In 1373 one of Milíč's first personal legal attacks was linked directly to this community. The parish priest at St. Stephen's church near to Jerusalem lodged a complaint with the archbishop regarding the incomes from the houses of the community (See Map 6.1). Previously, the priest claimed, his parish had received the tithes from Jerusalem's houses. According to the priest, since the

78 Palacký, *Über Formelbücher*, vol. I, 183.

79 Multiple historians have argued that Milíč's career can be understood as a part of the *devotion moderna* movement. If this is accepted, Jerusalem can be considered as an example of the movement's preferred *vita communis*. See, Johanna Girke-Schreiber, "Die böhmische Devotio moderna", in Ferdinand Seibt (ed.), *Bohemia Sacra: Das Christentum in Böhmen 973–1972* (Düsseldorf: 1974), 81–91; Manfred Gerwing, "Die böhmische Reformbewegung und die niederländische Devotio moderna: Ein Vergleich", in Ferdinand Seibt and Winfried Eberhard (eds.), *Westmitteleuropa, Ostmitteleuropa: Vergleiche und Beziehungen. Festschrift für Ferdinand Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag* (Munich: 1992), 175–184; Ludvik Nemec, "The Czech Reform Movement: *Devotio Moderna* in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 124 (1980), 386–397.

80 "… lupanar antiquum … qui locus Venecie dicebatur …"

"… the ancient brothel, which was a place called Venice." Beneš Krabice of Weitmil, *Chronicon ecclesie Pragensis*, in, *FRB*, vol. IV, 546.

That the Venice brothel was abolished at all is also a part of Charles IV's larger programme of renewal in Prague, and has much to do with the fact that after the boundaries of the city shifted with the introduction of the New Town and the expansion of the city's walls, Venice was shifted from the outskirts of town into the centre of the city. For more on these circumstances see Eleanor Janega, "Jan Milíč of Kroměříž and Emperor Charles IV: Preaching, Power, and the Church of Prague", PhD Thesis, University College London, 2014, 79–99; 102–108; Mengel, *Bones, Stones, and Brothels*, 211–262.

81 For the date of Milíč's chapel foundation see Mengel, *Bones, Stones, and Brothels*, 247; Václav Vladivoj Tomek, *Základy starého místopisu pražského* [Foundations of the Topography of Old Prague], vol. I (Prague: 1866), 98, no. 293.

preacher had established a chapel at Jerusalem however, St. Stephen's had been losing income and his livelihood was threatened, as people from the neighborhood were attending services with Milíč instead (See Map 6.1). Milíč was asked to surrender the patronage rights of the chapel to the archbishop's vicar general, a situation which he objected to with vehemence.[82] Hoping to recover his financial loses, Milíč appealed to the papal court at Avignon, later retracting his appeal at the request of the Archbishop Jan Očko.[83]

Clearly, the Jerusalem project was admired and favored by the people of Prague and the imperial court. It provided a much-needed service to a community of women who were fundamentally pitied, but also eschewed when it came to material support. Further, it was an exciting part of Prague's religious topography, and proof that the imperial city was a religiously focused capital able to turn even brothels into chapels. However, for those members of the clergy who were working in Prague's less celebrated and long-established network of parishes it was an afront. Not only did it have men and women living alongside each other in what could be considered scandalous circumstances, but it was also upending the usual order of things. This was a real-world financial concern to those who lacked the charisma and following of Milíč. Jerusalem sucked up donations that some would just as soon seen at their own parish altars. It is therefore possible to see how detractors may have wished to paint its work, and that of Milíč more broadly, as heretical.

3 Milíč and the Mendicants

While Milíč's work at Jerusalem was the source of outrage for the Prague clergy more broadly, in his sermons he had more specifically positioned himself as engaged in a struggle with the city's mendicant orders. In Prague, the rivalry between secular preachers and the mendicant clergy, as elsewhere, was nothing new. Before Milíč burst on to the scene the reform preacher Konrad Waldhauser had been preaching against the friars minor and occasionally inciting riots against them for good measure.[84] Milíč took up where his predecessor had left off and the mendicants, and what he saw as their errant ways, was a recurring theme in his sermons, as was the idea that their misdeeds were a sign of the End Times. According to the preacher the issues stemmed from a

82 Tádra (ed.), *Soudní akta konsistoře pražské*, 51.

83 Ibid., 51; 65–66.

84 Mengel, "Spitting Sermons: Mendicants and Seculars in Prague", *Bones, Stones and Brothels*, 149–210. See also Marin, "The Early Bohemian Reform", 44–45.

crisis of absenteeism among the Prague clergy. To a dedicated preacher such as Milíč a flock without a pastor was a problem. However, the preacher was also concerned that underserved parishioners would find themselves going to one of the city's ten houses of mendicants, all of whose members were theoretically able to give sermons, and in some cases administer sacraments as well.[85]

While the mendicants issuing sacraments was not an issue in and of itself, by the mid-14th century Prague had a pronounced history of unrest between the begging and regular orders.[86]

Perhaps the most marked incidence of discord occurred in 1312 when then Bishop Jan IV of Dražic (ca. 1260–1343) attempted to implement the findings of the Council of Vienne, which in turn had reaffirmed Pope Boniface VIII's (1235–1303) 1300 Bull *Super Cathedram*. Boniface's Bull recommended that the mendicants abstain from preaching either in their own churches whilst services were underway in any nearby parish church, or in the street. Moreover, any mendicants would have to make a direct approach to their local bishop and request a license which would give them the right to hear confession before doing so. Bishops, in turn, were tasked with ensuring that the friars received a mandated number of such licenses.[87] As a result, although mendicants had

85 In the Lesser Town there was a community of Dominican nuns at St. Anne as well as an Augustinian house at St. Thomas. In the Old Town Dominican nuns were housed at St. Anne and St. Lawrence, and Dominican monks at St. Clement. The communities of Franciscans in the Old Town were in residence at the monasteries of St. Francis and St. James and a community of Poor Claires lived next to the St. Francis community at Blessed Agnes. Finally, the New Town hosted three separate mendicant houses, the Carmelites at St. Mary of the Snows, the Augustinian nuns at St. Catherine of Alexandria, and a Severite community at The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary on the Lawn. See Map 6.1.

86 Prague, of course, was hardly alone in these disputes and literature about the mendicant/secular rivalry is vast. See, for example Guy Geltner, "William Of St. Amour's *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*: A False Start To Medieval Antifraternalism?", in *Defenders and Critics of Franciscan Life*, ed. Michael Cusato and G. Geltner (Leiden: 2009), 103–118; Virginia Davis, "Rivals for Ministry? Ordinations of Secular and Regular Clergy in Southern England c. 1300–1500", *Studies in Church History* (1989) 26, 99–109; M.-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne* (Paris: 1972; Nancy McLoughlin, "Gerson as a Preacher in Conflict between Mendicants and Secular Priests", in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: 2006), 249–291); Decima L. Douie, *The Conflict between the Seculars and the Mendicants at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century* (London: 1954); Michael F. Cusato, O.F.M., "The Radical Renewal of Pastoral Care in the Italian Communes, 1150–1250: Prelates, Secular Clergy, and the Mendicant Orders", *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: 2015).

87 See Guillaume de Saint-Amour, *De periculis novissimorum temporum*, ed. G. Geltner (Leuven: 2008); Penn R. Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*

to be allowed to preach and hear confession, it was theoretically possible to prevent certain individual friars from doing so.

Prague's mendicants were infuriated by these regulations and they resorted to accusing the bishop of ties with heretics before the papal court in Avignon to block their implementation. The accusations forced Dražic to leave Prague for Avignon in order to defend himself at the papal court for a period of eleven years. He returned vindicated, but was never able to bring full resolution to the issue, even seeing some friars minor and secular clergy resort to violence against one another in 1334.[88]

Even a cursory reading of Milíč's work shows that he had a strong allegiance to the anti-mendicant thinkers in Prague such as Dražic. His objections to the friars were rooted in his belief that they were in the habit of owning personal property. Milíč felt that the clergy generally, and especially the monastic orders, should avoid personal holdings.[89] For Milíč the failure to adhere to a vow of poverty was therefore also a failure to uphold the foundational concepts of the Church as a whole.[90] For Milíč it was simply a fact that if the mendicants held

(Princeton, NJ and Guildford: 1968), 11, 16–17; Guy Geltner, *The Making of Medieval Antifraternalism: Polemic, Violence, Deviance, and Remembrance* (Oxford: 2012).

88 Dražic was accused by a mendicant inquisitor of simony and the support of heretics, presumably for his interest in obscure Italian philosopher and physician Richardin of Pavia who had written a book condemned by one of Prague's Franciscan inquisitors. The bishop maintained that the charges against Richardin had been orchestrated by the Augustinians and Dominicans. See Alexander Patschovsky, *Die Anfänge einer ständigen Inquisition in Böhmen: Ein Prager Inquisitoren-Handbuch aus der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: 1975), 15–18, 30–38, 80–82, no. 1, 82–89, no. 2, 185–190, no. 104; and Zdeňka Hledíková, *Biskup Jan IV. z Dražic* [Bishop Jan IV of Dražic] (Prague: 1991), 78–98. On the outbreaks of violence, see Petr Žitavský, *Chronica Aulae Regiae*, in, *FRB*, ed. Josef Vítězslav Šimák, vol. IV, 321; Krabice, *Chronicon Ecclesiae Pragensis*, in, *FRB*, vol. IV, 486; and Francis of Prague, *Chronicon Francisci Pragensis*, in, *FRB*, Series Nova, ed. Jana Zachová, vol. 1 (Prague: 1997), 146–149.

89 "Quidam autem si vovent paupertatem, ut nichil habeant proprii in speciali possunt tamen habere in commune. Et in hoc fundatur omnis religio ut quidquid habent, sit eis commune, ut nemo dicat aliquid suum esse et quod nemo sit inter eos egens, sicut scribitur Actuum quarto."

"But some, if they vow poverty, so that they have nothing of their own in particular, yet may have it in common. And on this is founded all religion, that whatever they have may be common to them, that no one may say that anything is his own, and that no one be in want among them, as it is written in the Acts four." Milíč, "Omnes sancti", in *GD*, XII.D.1, fol. 141 r–v.

90 "Sic ecclesia sancta primitiva tempore plantabatur, ut sancti paupertatem amantes et divicias relinquentes, vite continentiam conservarent."

any property after having taken a vow of poverty, they were demonstrably oath breakers and thus did "much to destroy the holy Church."[91]

More to the point, he felt that the medicant orders had gone even further and were actively engaged in trying to amass great fortunes. He decried that among them "simony and property [was] not a sin … the wealth of the order [was] usury, and money-making [was] also piety among them, for they [gave] themselves to usury."[92] The same orders "destroy[ed] the holy church beyond measure"[93] by ignoring its hierarchy and usurping the power of other clergy members. According to the preacher, mendicants regularly heard confession without papal or diocesan consent, and granted indulgences that they did not possess.[94] Because of their supposed misdeeds, and their function as preachers, Milíč equated the mendicants with the false prophets who would proclaim the deeds of Antichrist at his coming.[95] Further, Milíč identified the

"In this way the early holy church was planted in time, that the saints, loving poverty and forsaking riches, might maintain self-control." Milíč, "St. Procopius", in *A*, I.D.37, fol. 157v.

91 "Hii sunt religiosi et praecipue mendicantes in partibus alimosinae, inter quos symonia et proprietas non est peccatum; nunc substantia ordinis usura … Hoc autem supra modum destruit ecclesiam sanctam."

"These are the religious and especially those who beg for alms, among whom simony and property is not a sin; now the wealth of the order is usury … This does much to destroy the holy church." Milíč, "Ad Papam Urbanum", 24.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 "… hii sunt, qui penetrant domos ecclesiarum et conscientiarum, et confessiones audiunt sine indulto et examine sui dyocesani, et sic usurpando sibi temeratie potestatem scindunt tunciam inconsutilem pejores cucifixoribus, qui eam integram dimiserunt; indulgentias dant, quas non habent, pro lucro mentientes populo …" Ibid.

"… these are the ones who penetrate the houses of churches and consciences, and hear confessions without pardon and examination of their diocesan, and thus recklessly usurping power for themselves, they tear apart the seamless tunic worse than the crucifixes …" Ibid.

95 "Religiosi etiam indifferenter audiunt confessiones non petita licentia vel gratia dyocesani, et hoc fere in toto mundo. Ex hiis omnibus apparet, Antichristum venisse … Dan id est Antichristus, serpens antiquus, in homine Antichristo colens umbram caeciatis momordit ungulas equorum, videlicet psuedoprophetarum, id est, affectiones eorum solidas veneno iniquitatis infecit …"

"The religious also hear confessions indiscriminately without seeking license or permissions from the diocesan, and this almost throughout the whole world. From all this it is clear that the Antichrist has come … Dan i.e. the Antichrist, the ancient serpent cultivating the shadow of blindness in the human Antichrist has bitten horses' heels, i.e. false prophets, i.e. he infected their staunch striving with the poison of iniquity …"

Milíč, "Libellus", 62, 63.

mendicants as "those who penetrate houses", or the servants of the devil as warned of in 2 Timothy 2:26–3:6.[96]

While the Prague friars and those who sought their services may have seen the mendicants as beneficial in a city which lacked adequate pastoral care, Milíč believed that they were false teachers who could only sway an unsuspecting laity from the Lord. Not only could they not be looked to in the fight against the absent clergy, but the dangers that they posed required intervention as well. Thus, as the mendicants worked, they were converting the innocent away from the true faith, and to the cause of Antichrist, having "fallen from heaven, before the lashing tail of the dragon."[97]

The mendicants, in turn, seem to have taken Milíč at his word. He was to be considered their enemy, and they already had an established way of dealing with such threats. Thus, like Dražic before him, Milíč became the subject of accusations of heresy, included earlier in this chapter, sent by the mendicants to Avignon. In so doing, Milíč's accusers were able to bypass Prague's Archbishop, and alleged directly to the pontiff that Milíč was a known eschatological rabblerouser. They claimed he had been imprisoned in 1366 in Prague for preaching the coming of Antichrist, a somewhat suspicious accusation for several reasons.

Firstly, we have no records of any such imprisonment. Given that Milíč had been requested to provide sermons at the Prague synod three times between 1364 and 1373, it seems doubtful that at some point the archbishop had become

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96 "… et resipiscant a diaboli laqueis a quo capti tenentur ad ipsius voluntatem. Hoc autem scito quod in novissimis diebus instabunt tempora periculosa et erunt homines se ipsos amantes cupidi elati superbi blasphemi parentibus inoboedientes ingrati scelesti sine affectione sine pace criminatores incontinentes inmites sine benignitate proditores protervi tumidi voluptatium amatores magis quam Dei habentes speciem quidem pietatis virtutem autem eius abnegantes et hos devita ex his enim sunt qui penetrant domos et captivas ducunt mulierculas oneratas peccatis quae ducuntur variis desideriis …"

"And they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil by whom they are held captive at his will. Know also this, that in the last days shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasure more than of God: Having an appearance indeed of godliness but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid. For of these sort are they who penetrate houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, who are led away with divers desires …" 2 Timothy 2:26–3:6.

On those who penetrate houses, see footnote 94.

97 "Nunc autem non stant fixae in firmamento coeli, sed ceciderunt de coelo a facie ferientis caudae draconis."

"But now they do not stay fixed in the firmament of heaven, but have fallen from heaven, before the lashing tale of the dragon." Ibid., 4, 26, 27.

frustrated enough with the preacher to imprison him and then somehow invite him back.[98] Further, Milíč was at least on good enough terms with the cathedral to succumb to the complaints leveled against Jerusalem on behalf of the pastor of St. Stephen's church nearby; it seems unlikely that the Archbishop was in the habit of imprisoning the preacher. Thus, the fact that this incident had ever even occurred is questionable at best.

Secondly, given Milíč's staunch antipathy towards the mendicants, one must assume that at least part of the reason that the accusation had been drafted at all was a political move to silence a popular and outspoken opponent. It is certainly undeniable that the mendicants had more than enough reason to wish to curtail Milíč's practice. Thirdly, it is suspicious that the mendicants chose to bypass their local authorities and make an appeal to the pope. Had such an incident taken place clearly the Prague cathedral had cleared the preacher of any wrongdoing and were happy to have him return to his work, and their pulpit, for some time now. Yet the mendicants were not happy with such an outcome. Their desire to go straight to the papacy intimates that the accusation is rooted in political struggle. The mendicants were intent on doing the greatest possible damage to Milíč's reputation, and as a result they intended to have their complaints seen by the highest possible court. Moreover, this move indicates that the mendicants may have realized that those more familiar with Milíč's preaching, as the local authorities were, may have dismissed the articles of accusation as soon as they were presented, knowing full well that his work was acceptable, and having previously judged it as such.

Finally, the accusation itself is notable as the charge that Milíč had preached the coming of Antichrist in 1366 was by no means new information for the Church. As mentioned in brief previously, in 1367 Milíč was arrested in Rome for preaching on Antichrist's coming, a year later than the prediction cited in the accusations. The Church had, therefore, already been alerted to this theoretical theological threat. However, by the time of the mendicants' accusations, 1373, the reform-minded Urban v had died, and in his place was Pope Gregory xi, famous for his vigorous measures against heretics. The mendicants thus may have been attempting to have Milíč declared a heretic through double jeopardy, hoping for an outcome more favorable to them on the same charge, with a more conservative judge.

Under scrutiny, then, the idea of Milíč as a consummate heretic who was rightly accused and seeking to bring down the very structure of the Church

98 Loskot, *Milíč*, 43. This chapter has referenced one of these sermons, "Grex Perditus", several times. In addition to the manuscript version referenced here a printed version of all three is available as *Johannis Milicii de Cremsir Tres sermones synodales*, ed. Vilém Herold and Milan Mráz (Prague: 1974).

breaks down almost immediately. It is much more likely that it was a rivalry, and not any sort of considered theological output, that birthed the perception of the preacher as a firebrand radical which his actual works, and the connections that he enjoyed at the Prague cathedral, belie.

4 Milíč and Janov

A second, and often cited, reason that Milíč's beliefs are commonly considered heretical stems from his biography the *Narracio de Myliczyo* written by Matěj of Janov (ca. 1350–ca. 1393), or Matthias of Janov, who considered himself a disciple of the older preacher.[99] Like Milíč before him, Janov was the son of lower nobility. Moved to join the Church, and swayed by the work of Milíč, the young Janov was in contact with the man he would describe as his mentor from at least 1372. Unlike Milíč, who had by this time jettisoned any interest in the hierarchy of the Church, Janov set about to climb the ranks of the clergy by means of intense scholastic study. His education began first in Prague, and later at the University of Paris. It was in Paris that Janov first began to write on Antichrist, and where he also wrote a biography of the by then deceased Milíč.[100] As was befitting a man of Janov's stature he was granted a benefice at the Prague cathedral in 1381. This role, though officially granted, would never fully materialize, and Janov spent much of his life litigating for the position he felt was his by right. He even travelled to Rome to argue his case, to little avail.[101]

If Janov had a decidedly more worldly outlook than his self-declared master, he nevertheless was able to attract a similar level of controversy. In 1388 he found himself on the wrong side of a decision of a Prague synod, which declared that the laity were not to receive communion more than once a

99 For the full *Narracio* please see *RVNT*, vol. III, 358 436. Another addition can be found in *FRB*, vol. I, 431–436.

100 Vlastimil Kybal, *M. Matěj z Janova: Jeho život, spisy a učení* [Matěj of Janov: His Life, Writings, and Teachings] (Prague: 1905), 65.

Janov is himself a figure of on-going interest and several intriguing studies have recently been published about his own work. See, for example, Ota Halama, "What Was Known About Matej of Janov During the First Four Centuries After his Death?", in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, ed. Zdeněk V. David and David Holeton, vol. 6. (Prague: 2007), 33–43. Jana Nechutová, "Matej z Janova: Znovu objeven biblický princip?" [Matěj of Janov: biblical principle rediscovered?], *Acta reformationem Bohemicam illustrantia* 5 (2004), 7–16; "Matej of Janov and His Work 'Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti': The Significance of Volume VI and Its Relation to the Previously Published Volumes", in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, vol. 2 (Prague: 1998), 15–24.

101 Kybal, *M. Matěj z Janova*, 27.

month. He was then forced in 1389 to withdraw his personal teachings on daily communion and forced to give up preaching by the decree of another synod. His conflict with the Prague clergy continued until 1392 when he volunteered himself to the custody of then Archbishop Jan of Jenštejn (1348–1400).[102] It was during these years that he undertook the writing of his monumental work the *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, which was intended as an encyclopedic volume of his personal religious beliefs, a task which took him from 1384 to 1394. The work was written as a sort of apologia for his beliefs. It did not work. Janov died in 1394 without ever having been able to restore his preaching rights in the city.

Regardless of his own personal fate, Janov's *Narracio de Myliczyo* was taken as an important source on the life of the man he called his master, and in particular one incident which Janov reported on has been repeated more than any other: namely, that during a sermon, Milíč pointed to the Emperor Charles IV, who was in attendance, and called the monarch Antichrist.[103] This anecdote remains one of the most popular regarding Milíč's eschatological work, and is often held as proof of his willingness to deliver his message whatever the political ramifications.[104]

However, this reported outburst does not stand up under scrutiny for several reasons, the first being that this is the only reference one can find to this sort of Antichrist accusation in any of the works of, or about, Milíč. Hundreds of Milíč's sermons survive to us, and in none of them does he identify an individual as Antichrist. Indeed, in his "Libellus" he claims to have asked the Holy Spirit who the Antichrist was, only to be told that it was not for him to know.[105] This is the closest that Milíč comes in any of his writings to identifying an Antichrist.

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102 R.R. Betts, "The *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti* of Matěj z Janova", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1931), 345.

103 "Hic prelatos summos, archiepiscopos et episcopos orripuit viriliter pro hiis, in quibus visi sunt aberrare, his indutus zelo quasi toraci imperatorem predictum aggressus digito indicauit et dixi sibi coram omnibus, quod ille sit magnus Antychristus, propter quod carceres et vincula diutine est perpessus."

"Here he rebuked the highest prelates, archbishops, and bishops manfully for those in whom they were seen to have gone astray, clothed with zeal, he attacked the aforesaid emperor with his finger, and said to him in front of all, that he is the great Antichrist, because of which he suffered long imprisonments and prison." See Janov, *Regulae*, in *FRB*, vol. 1, 433.

104 A particularly recent example is Milan Kopecký inclusion of this story in his 1999 *Jan Milíč z Kroměříže a Jan z Jenštejna* (Žďár nad Sázavou: 1999), 7. Older examples include R.R. Betts, "The Great Debate about Universals", in, *Essays in Czech History*, 33; and that of Miloslav Kaňák, *Milíč*, 23.

105 Milíč, "Libellus", 66.

Of second consideration is Milíč's outspoken support of the emperor as a possible ally in the fight against Antichrist. It is clear that Milíč advocated that the pope should appeal to Charles IV for help in consolidating the faithful for the fight against the final enemy. In Milíč's hierarchical world view, the best individuals to implement reform were those possessed of the requisite power and moral authority. To make such a suggestion thus indicates Milíč's conviction that the emperor was possessed of a genuine faith and holiness and should be seen as a force for salvation rather than as an enemy. Moreover, it is highly questionable whether Charles IV would have been willing to align himself with and support Milíč by donating the Venice brothel to the preacher had he been the target of such an attack. Even the most magnanimous possible ruler could be forgiven declining to aid such an aggressor, and whilst Charles was known to be sympathetic, this episode stretches reasonable credulity given the men's relationship.[106]

Furthermore, the veracity of this report is called into question by its very source. The *Narracio* is presented in the *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti* as though the older preacher's work was an obvious precursor to that of Janov's. This includes an extensive discussion of the younger preacher's Antichrist theories. It is probable that the appearance of these writings side by side was an overt attempt on Janov's part to encourage his audience to view his own work as an extension of Milíč's. Indeed, this supposition is supported by Janov's writings in defence of his own Antichrist beliefs. That those aware of Milíč's work would find this hard to believe is even hinted at by Janov himself who at one point stated that his audience may not believe him when he recounted these things, but he was simply reporting on the truth he had witnessed at the foot of his predecessor.[107]

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106 For more on the relationship between Milíč and Emperor Charles IV, see Janega, *Jan Milíč of Kroměříž and Emperor Charles IV*.

107 "Quantum ad presentem inquisicionem attinet, alius Helyas, id est vir habundans spiritu Helye requiratur, qui diutnum rupit silencium de adventu Christi ultimo et Antychristi. Et si vultis accipere, quantum noticia gestorum michi assererdum inducit, ipse est Myliczius, venerabilis presbyter et predicator, potens in opere et in sermone, cuius verbum tam quam facula ardebat … Et obsecro hic unum quemque lectitantem, ne michi indignetur, si testimonium perhibeo hiis, que oculis vidi et meis auribus audivi et manus mee tractaverunt; quamvis pro de passurus contemptum et plurimas derisiones …"

"As for the present investigation, another Helias, that is, a man abounding in the spirit of Helia, is required, who breaks the long silence about the last coming of Christ and the Antichrist. And if you are willing to accept, as much as the news of what has been done leads me to assert, he is Milíč, a venerable priest and preacher, powerful in work and speech, whose word burned as much as a torch … And here I beseech each one of the litigants not to be indignant with me if I bear witness to these, which I have seen with my

Despite Janov's insistence, even a cursory review of his work reveals that he deviated from his master's eschatological thought on many occasions, and most especially in his multiple uses of Antichrist language. At various times Janov proclaimed that the King of the Romans, then Charles IV's son Wenceslaus [Václav] IV (1361–1419) was Antichrist;[108] that the Holy Roman Empire itself as a whole was Antichrist[109] and that the Antichrist was certain to come from within the Church in the person of the man in the "state of highest priesthood", which is to say the pope was Antichrist.[110] In each of these cases Janov makes

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eyes and heard with my ears and handled with my hands; although in return he suffered contempt and much derision." Janov, *Narracio*, in *RVNT*, vol. III, 356–357.

108 'Ponitur autem hec eadem bestia habere septem capitam et coruna decem. Hoc ponitur ad ostendendum, quo modtalium gens sit dilacerata et divulsa et supramodum terribilis et crudelis et non unum aliquod caput habens, sed multi per que non quidem regitur in iusticiam et virtutem aut secundum legem divinam vel humanam aliquam racioni consentaneam, sed solum ut bestia affeccionibus et fortitudine crudeli; non dirigitur ad voluntatem dei, sed solum secundum su cornuta capita, suas delicias, avariciam et tepiditatem adinplendam.

Multa etenim sun in christianitate regna, multi principatus et ducatus, nullum habencioa respectum adinvicem nullam connexionem in tempore goc, cui ist visio bestie est coaptata, sed magis scissa ab invicem propter negligenciam inperii et inobedienciam ac discessionem …'

"Now this same beast is supposed to have seven heads and ten crowns. This is put to show how such a nation is torn and torn apart, and exceedingly terrible and cruel, and not having one head, but many, by whom it is not governed in justice and virtue, or according to divine or human law, according to any reason, but only like a beast with affections. and with cruel strength; it is not directed to the will of God, but only according to its own horned heads, to fulfill its own pleasures, avarice and lukewarmness.

For there are many kingdoms in Christendom, many principalities and leaderships, who have no respect for each other, no connection at the time of God, to whom this vision of the beast is attached, but rather torn from one another because of the neglect of the empire and disobedience and dissension." Ibid., vol. IV, 208.

109 "Que bestia significat postatem secularem, scilicet imperatoriam et militariam cum universis regnos christianorum carnalium, qui sunt desertati spiritus Jhesu Christi per tempora a iudicio divino diffinita …"

"That beast signifies a secular order, that is, imperial and military with all the kingdoms of carnal Christians, who are the deserted spirits of Jesus Christ through the ages defined by the divine judgment …" Ibid., 198.

110 "Sed neque erit [Antichristus] aliquis christianus potens, tyrannus et persecutor manifestus Jhesu Christi tantum, quia talis nondum ad plenitudinem iniquitatis pervenerit, quoniam nequior eo foret, qui sub specie sanctitatis et summe religionis sanctos deciperet et introduceret in ecclesiam, contemptum dei sapiencie et virtutis Jhesu Christi; neque insuper talis summum locum attingeret dignitatis, quia superior valde eo foret status ecclesie sacerdotum, presertim status summi sacerdotis."

"But the [Antichrist] will not be a powerful Christian, a tyrant and a manifest persecutor of Jesus Christ only because such a person has not yet reached the fullness of iniquity, since he would be worse than he who would deceive the saints under the guise of holiness

specific reference to his targets as "the beast", the seven headed monster said to represent Antichrist in the Apocalypse, or simply as "Antichrist".

It is probable that Janov was attempting to justify his own problematic thoughts by linking them to those of Milíč who enjoyed a sustained popularity in Prague and the Empire after his death. When this goal is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that Janov most likely constructed the story describing Milíč's denunciation of Charles IV in order to justify himself. With this anecdote Janov could imply that the still admired Milíč had engaged in the same behaviours that had brought his student condemnation. The story, like Janov's insistences that his ideas were imparted to him by Milíč, is therefore in all likelihood nothing more than an attempt to justify the career of yet another embattled reformer. As a result, it cannot be considered a legitimate record of an actual event.

A further consideration for the assumption of Milíč as an eschatological agitator is the aforementioned historiographical one. When in the context of the Czech National Revival, Milíč's work was thought of as an early reflection of that of the Hussites it was assumed that it was also revolutionary in character. As such, the eschatological implications were presumed to verge on the heretical as well. If the Hussites were agitators whose work put them outside of the Church, then so was Milíč, who as a theoretical predecessor of Jan Hus (1370–1450) should be thought of as in conflict with Rome.[111] Indeed Molnár went as far as insisting that a radical eschatology was one of the unique characteristics of what he termed the 'First Reformation', and therefore Milíč must have possessed a radicalized vision of the end.[112] However, as this study has made clear, these presuppositions have little to do with the actual character of Milíč's Antichrist work, and one can dismiss such characterizations with alacrity when an analysis of the actual works, and his connections at both court and cathedral, is undertaken. Janov, on the other hand is another matter, and as Marin has shown, his more radical writings had much to inspire the Hussites.[113] This is not to say that Milíč had nothing to add to the conversation. However, his beliefs skewed towards reform, not revolution.

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and high religion and introduce into the church contempt for the wisdom of God and the power of Jesus Christ; moreover, such a person would not reach the highest place of dignity, because the status of the priests of the church would be much higher than that, especially the status of the high priest."

Ibid., vol. III, 9.

111 Masaryk, *Česká Otázka*, 223.

112 Amadeo Molnár, J.B. Souček, L. Brož, B. Pospíšil, and J.L. Hromádka, *Od reformace k zítřku* [From the Reformation to Tomorrow] (Prague: 1956), 13.

113 Marin, *La Réforme commence à Prague*, 79–81.

5 Conclusions

After reviewing underpinnings of medieval Antichrist thought, it is clear that Milíč's views on the subject are largely common. His ideas on the person of Antichrist, and his army of smaller antichrists, were built upon the same biblical foundation as most others in the medieval period, and were augmented by insight from the Gloss eschewing any other texts that did not find reference within it. Like many others of his time, Milíč also interpreted what he saw as a general moral decline in society and the Church as a sign of the coming of the final enemy. He found that the many wars, natural disasters, and epidemics of the 14th century were evidence of this fact, as God expressed his displeasure with the world. One of the few remarkable aspects of Milíč's eschatological rational is that he pointed to groups of corrupt individuals who wielded spiritual and temporal power as serving Antichrist. If the cause was unique, then so was his solution, for Milíč believed that the defeat of the Man of Sin could only be brought about by the pope, with the help of the emperor. It was necessary to rely upon the leaders of what Milíč perceived to be 'Rome' to restrain Antichrist and rally the faithful against him.

Yet despite the conservative nature of Milíč's eschatological beliefs, he is often considered to have been a radical. This has much to do with the ways that Milíč's work was controversial. His practice in Jerusalem was a major incursion in the religious topography of Prague. While his conversion of a brothel to a religious community was generally praised by the population at large, and important enough that it attracted the patronage of the emperor himself, it also put Milíč into conflict with his fellow clergy members. He was seen as diverting funds from their rightful source and brought to court for it specifically. Further, his practice included direct accusations of wrongdoing against the members of the medicant orders in the city. This was likely unwise of him, given that these same men also had a history of using a specific and highly effective method to deal with their detractors: they accused them of heresy at the papal court.

It is these heresy conceptions in and of themselves which helped to create the historiographical idea of Milíč as radical, alongside the dramatic story of an Antichrist accusation directed at Charles IV. Those who are unable to undertake a detailed analysis of his sermons can hardly be blamed for seeing a pattern of accusation and taking it as credible. Yet there is a second possible reason for the presumption that Milíč was an eschatological agitator: his confluence with the Hussites following the *národni obrození* of the late 19th century. There was a specific and nationalistic desire to see the preacher as

obsessed with reorganizing society and insulting the Empire, and therefore a desire to take these accusations and stories at their word.

As dull as it may be comparatively, a close examination of the work shows that while Milíč's eschatological beliefs did exhibit unique attributes, they fail to live up to the shocking reputation which they have enjoyed up to this time. Instead of the romanticized picture of Milíč as a firebrand eschatological rabble-rouser, we are left with the image of a man who wanted to save the world using its extant power structures, reform, and radical supplication to religious and temporal hierarchy. While this may be less exciting from a modern perspective, it gives us a window into a mindset of someone who truly believed that good leaders can be trusted to help their fellow man, and that individuals could work together to improve the conditions of their community. Perhaps that is radical in itself.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

A Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, *Abortivus*.
FRB *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*.
G Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, *Gratia Dei*.
MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.
RVNT Matěj of Janov, *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. Vlastimil Kybal, 4 vols. (Innsbruck, 1908–1913).

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CHAPTER 7

Apocalypticism in Bohemia after 1400: Violence and the Eschaton

Stephen Lahey and Lucie Mazalová

One of the defining characteristics of Hussite theology was a conviction that the eschaton was at hand, and that Antichrist was active in destroying the Church and its defenders. Four figures stand out among the many advocates for Bohemian reform, each playing a special part in the phenomenon of Hussitism. Matthias (Matěj) of Janov's *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti* has only recently begun to be recognized to have been central to Hussite theology, despite Matthias's death in 1389. Among the treatises included in the *Regulae* are two massive works of exegesis, *De Anticristo* and *De abhominacione*. Together these make up over a thousand pages in the present edition, making it one of the longest eschatological works of the medieval period.[1] While this work had been powerfully influenced by the sermons of Milíč, it was condemned. Among its admirers were Jan Hus and Jakoubek of Stříbro, the most important figures in the formation of Hussite theology.[2] Hus famously preached to large crowds in the vernacular.[3] Jakoubek owned his own copy of Matthias's *De Antichristo*, and used it in his early indictment of clerical corruption, his *De Antichristo* of 1412. One of the dominant figures in early opposition to the Hussite movement, Stanislav of Znojmo, responded to Jakoubek in a carefully reasoned, theologically measured rejection of this eschatological aspect of the Bohemian reform movement, which appears to have been used in Moravia in preaching against Hussitism in later years. The leader of the zealous Tábor faction in the Hussite movement, Mikuláš Biskupec of Pehlřimov, was known for his enthusiastic preaching about the coming End Times, and will be represented in a discussion of his commentary on Matthew 24, found in the Gospels Commentary he

1 *Matthiae de Janov Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. Vlastimil Kybal, vol. 3: *Tractatus de Antichristo* (Innsbruck: 1911); vol. 4: *Tractatus de abominatione desolationis in loco sancto* (Innsbruck: 1913).

2 For the ties between Hus and Matthias, see Jana Nechutová, "Matěj z Janova – M. Jan Hus?", in *Husitský Tábor Supplementum I* (Tábor, 2001), 71–80.

3 Lucie Mazalová has recently published a study of his eschatology that fills a notable gap in the literature on him – *Eschatology in the Work of Jan Hus* (Brepols: 2021).

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wrote while imprisoned in his last years.[4] Finally, the autodidact Petr Chelčický, who actively preached non-violence and Christian anarchism in Czech was likewise convinced of the dangers Antichrist posed to the Christian life. The essay will conclude with a discussion of Chelčický's vernacular eschatology. While the Bohemian reform movement had many preachers and theologians articulating a range of positions, those mentioned in this chapter represent the voices that had the greatest impact on popular eschatology.

Introduction

Antichrist loomed over 14th-century Bohemia, when papal schism laid bare the bitter quarrels and venal politics of the Church, and the kingdom was experiencing a period of apparent decline under Václav (Wenceslaus) IV.[5,6] The immediacy of the threat to Christian order provided a good opportunity for centuries of dark theological visions of the eschaton contained within monastic exegesis and learned debates to find a much broader audience as the Bohemian reform movement gathered momentum. As the preceding chapter has shown, sermons imbued with apocalyptic imagery, and particularly with warnings of Antichrist, flourished in late 14th-century Prague. In the first decades of the 15th century, a new generation of theology students would develop several themes that had characterized the thought of Milíč and Matthias of Janov, reframing them by combining the ideas with those of John Wyclif.

In this chapter, we will discuss several instances in which these theologians used these ideas to articulate a new reform theology, a Bohemian admixture of apocalypticism, clergy reform, and liturgical innovation. While medieval society is often portrayed as redolent with exemplary capital punishments, these portrayals frequently are meant to emphasize a cruelty that later people believed themselves to have overcome. As the Hussite movement developed, the use of public violence to enforce the morals defining the Christian

4 Thomas Fudge provides a useful bibliography on Biskupec in his "Crime, Punishment and Pacifism in the Thought of Bishop Mikuláš of Pelhřimov, 1420–1452", in *Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice,* vol. 3 (Prague: 2000), 69–103.

5 This study was written with support from the GAČR EXPRO grant – *Observance Reconsidered: The Uses and Abuses of the Reform* (*Individuals, Institutions, Society*), GX20-08389X at Masaryk University in Brno.

6 Pavlína Cermanová, *Čechy na konci věků* (Prague: 2013); also see her "The Apocalyptic Background of Hussite Radicalism", in *A Companion to the Hussites*, eds. Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup (Leiden: 2020), 187–218.

life became at once a cause for alarm among its opponents, and for division within its ranks. The person most often associated with Bohemian reform, Jan Hus, was not inclined to employ physical coercion. As we will see, while Hus regarded improving Christian morality as directly connected to the threat of Antichrist, his solution did not rely as heavily on coercion through threat of punishment as it did in others.

Hus is familiar to Church historians, not least because he lent his name to the movement catalyzed by his death at Constance. He was a university-trained preacher who had completed a commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences and served as rector of the University of Prague in 1409–10. He was a gifted preacher, embodying many of the ideals that Matthias of Janov had used to describe Milíč, and large collections of his sermons, both in Latin and in Czech, display his skills.[7] For Hus, the apocalypse was at hand, and the urgency with which he preached communicated his belief that the reform of the Church could not wait.[8] After Hus's death, Jakoubek of Stříbro, a companion at the university, would become the *de facto* leading theologian of the Bohemian reform movement that came to be called Hussite.[9] Jakoubek's ability to combine the varying species of apocalypticism of Matthias, Wyclif, and earlier figures such as Hugh of St. Victor and William of St. Amour into a rich mixture featured a fixation on Antichrist. One of his earlier writings, a stern warning of the immediacy of the danger Antichrist posed to Christendom, angered the Church in Bohemia, and led his *quondam* master, Stanislav of Znojmo, to formulate a response typical of the early indictments of Hussite reform.

Another student in the Bohemian theology school in the early years of the 15th-century would take a more radical turn. Mikuláš Biskupec of Pehlřimov was likewise enthusiastic in his embrace of Matthias and Wyclif, and would become the leading theologian of the radical branch of the Hussite movement

7 Jana Nechutová, "Matěj z Janova – M. Jan Hus?" in *Husitský Tábor. Sborník husitského muzea – supplementum 1* (Ústí nad Labem: 2001), 71–82.

8 The literature on Hus eschatology is vast, and until the middle of this century, defined by a variety of partisan views. See Mazalová, *Eschatology in the Work of Jan Hus* (Turnhout: 2022); Thomas Fudge, *Jan Hus Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London: 2010); František Šmahel and Ota Pavlíček, *A Companion to Jan Hus* (Leiden: 2015); Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley: 1967); František Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution* (Hannover: 2002).

9 Paul DeVooght, *Jacobellus de Stříbro, Premier theologién du hussitisme* (Louvain: 1972); Pavel Soukup, *Reformní kazatelství a Jakoubek ze Stříbra* (Prague: 2011). For Jakoubek's attitude towards the use of violence, see Pavel Soukup, "Metaphors of the Spiritual Struggle in the Bohemian Reformation", in *Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, vol. 6 (Prague: 2004), 88–98.

based in Tábor.[10] Tensions between Prague Hussites and Tábor remained troublesome to the movement's unity, not only because of Tábor's firm belief in the use of terror in their imposition of Hussite reform, but also because of its suspicion of property ownership, social class, and any kind of secular law. Biskupec was Tábor's "little bishop", representing the faction from its inception through to its defeat at Lipany in 1435. Among the works that illustrate his understanding of how to preach the certainty of apocalypse to the people are two, his commentary on the Apocalypse of John, and his commentary on the Gospels.[11] Finally, an individual lived in south Bohemia about whom little is known, save that he was familiar both to Tábor and Jakoubek. His writings, all in Czech, bespeak a unique mind, an autodidact contemptuous of university theology, and convinced of the Christian call to radical pacifism, the destruction of all compulsory social rule, and private property. Petr Chelčický, claimed as a forefather of Anarchism by Kropotkin, and as a guiding spirit by Masaryk, represents another form of Bohemian reform defined by its opposition to Antichrist.[12]

1 Jan Hus

Although the Hussites, famous for their apocalyptic folk pilgrimages to the hilltops (1419), derived their name from Jan Hus, their eschatological views frequently differed from those of Hus. It was many years after he began preaching in Czech in the Bethlehem Chapel (1402) before the reform movement spread its ideas more widely outside of the University of Prague, allowing uneducated laymen to actively intervene in the events of the *eschaton*. Besides Milíč of Kroměříž and his New Jerusalem, it was mainly Jan Hus who opened the way to communication with the laity, because he was much more of a zealous

10 František Michálek Bartoš, *Mikuláš z Pelhřimova, biskup táborského bratrstva* (Tábor: 1939); Paul DeVooght, "Nicolas Biskupec de Pelhřimov et son apport á l'évolution de la méthologie théologique hussite", *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 40 (1973), 175–207; Thomas A. Fudge, "Crime, Punishment and Pacifism in the Thought of Bishop Mikuláš of Pelhřimov, 1420–1452", 69–105.

11 Erhard Peschke, "Zur Theologie des Taboriten Nikolaus von Pilgram", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* 19 (1970), 153–170.

12 Murray L. Wagner, *Petr Chelčický, A Radical Separatist in Hussite Bohemia*, Studies in Mennonite and Anabaptist History (Scottdale: 1983); Jaroslav Boubín, *Petr Chelčický: Myslitel a reformátor* (Prague: 2012). For Chelčický and Masaryk, see Stephen Lahey, "Czech Political Medievalism: Tomáš G. Masaryk and Petr Chelčický", *Studies in Medievalism* 30 (2021), 9–18.

preacher than a theologian.[13] Moreover, when he began fearlessly pointing the finger at concrete Antichrists in the contemporary Church, he believed himself to be a soldier opposing Antichrist at the end of ages, bound to that role to the end. Some of his followers also confirmed him in this conviction. The English Wycliffite priest Richard Wyche wrote to him in 1410 that the red dragon, which has as many heads as the Apocalypse describes, had already breathed out flames of fire in Bohemia (cf. Apoc. 12:3–1), and that Hus should work as an exemplary soldier of Christ, never ceasing to preach, and to bring as many people as possible back to the truth.[14] This role was expanded during his exile and especially his imprisonment in Constance in 1414 and 1415 by the addition of the specter of martyrdom. After his death on 6th July 1415 Hus's role took on an even more intense apocalyptic flavor when Jakoubek of Stříbro, in his sermon delivered probably in 1416 or 1417 in the Bethlehem Chapel, referred to Hus as the second prophet Elijah.[15] Hus's role as God's soldier opposing Antichrist is, however, the only significant apocalyptic aspect of

13 For an overview of Hus, see Šmahel and Pavlíček (eds.), *A Companion to Jan Hus* (Leiden, Boston: 2015); for a bibliography of Hus's works, see František Michálek Bartoš and Pavel Spunar, *Soupis pramenů k literární činnosti M. Jana Husa a M. Jeronýma Pražského* (Prague: 1965). The most recent overview of the volumes of Hus's works and the plan for their modern critical editions study is by Helena Krmíčková, "K vydávání Husových spisů Magistri Iohannis Hus Opera omnia po šesti (ale i dvou) desetiletích," *Listy filologické* CXLII (2019), 1–2.

14 "(…) draco ille rufus tot habens capita, de quo in Apokalipsi, iam de ore suo remiserit flumen magnum, per quod absorbere nititur mulierem (…) Tu ergo Hus (…) labora sicud bonus miles Christi Jesu. Predica, insta verbo et exemplo et quos poteris, ad viam revoca veritatis, quia non propter censuras frivolas et fulminaciones Antichristianas est veritas ewangelica subticenda." Iohannes Hus, *Korespondence a dokumenty*, ed. Václav Novotný (Prague: 1920), 76 and 78 (hereafter *Korespondence*). Trans.: "The red dragon, having as many heads as the apocalypse mentions, has already vomited a great flame from its mouth through which it seeks to devour the woman (…) You therefore, Hus (…) labor like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Preach, be instant in word and example, and recall to the truth all whom you can, because the truth of the Gospel must not be silenced by unwise prohibitions and antichristian bluster." Cf. Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 261, no. 310.

15 The exact day of delivering *Sermo habitus in Bethlehem in memoriam novorum martyrum M. J. Hus et M. Hieronymi* is unknown. Ota Halama, *Svatý Jan Hus*: *Stručný přehled projevů domácí úcty k českému mučedníku v letech 1415–1620* (Prague: 2015), 16. Hus was perceived as a martyr right after his death, but there is not much detailed information on this. Milena Bartlová, "Jan Hus mezi středověkou a raně novověkou memorií," in *Jan Hus 1415 a 600 let poté, Husitský Tábor, Supplementum 4* (Tábor: 2015), 208. Much more is known about fine art in the 16th and 17th centuries: Hus's role of the saint martyr with nimbus at the stake in Constance is depicted e.g. in the *Jena Codex* from around 1500 on the folio 41v. *Jenský kodex* (Prague: 2009). For more about the sixteenth-century depictions see Martina Šárovcová, "John Wyclif, Jan Hus a Martin Luther jako apokalyptičtí proroci," in *Jan Hus 1415*, 243–264. Cf. also history of an annual commemoration and feast of the

his life and teaching that prevents us from evaluating his entire eschatology as apocalyptic, as will become clear.

Hus had been considering Antichrist's presence in the world at least since 1404, at the University of Prague, where Wyclif's ideas still circulated and where other variant views not declared by the official Church remained generally open to discussion. On 1st December 1404,[16] in the university sermon in memory of Charles IV *Abiciamus opera tenebrarum*, he declared that the last days described in 2 Timothy 3:1 had now come, that his audience faced the end of ages, described in 1 Corinthians 10:11, and that the Antichrists were already in the world (1 John 2:18). The most telling evidence of this was the persecution and schism at all levels of the Church, contributed to by the hypocrisy, inaction, and avarice of the clergy. Priests had become currently soldiers of darkness rather than of light,[17] and thus the sermon *Abiciamus* serves as a biblically founded spiritual battle cry. Already here Hus had used his greatest non-biblical authority for his attack on Antichrist, Bernard of Clairvaux (later calling him "scrutator ecclesiae", the examiner of the Church),[18] citing his 33rd sermon from the *Super cantica canticorum* (*Abiciamus*, 104–105). In accordance with the idea that the "tempus novissimum", the last time, had already come, he also produced a compulsory university commentary on selected epistles called *Super canonicas*[19] (1404–1405).

However, Hus unveiled his first emphatic announcement of the Antichrist's presence in the synodal sermon *Diliges Dominum Deum* pronounced in 1405 at the October synod of St. Luke's, before an audience upon whom it had a major social impact. In the Augustinian tradition,[20] he challenged the present clergy to consider whether they themselves were not Antichrists, apostates from the law of Christ, supporting his challenge with verses from Matthew 24:12 about the multiplication of iniquity and the waxing cold of love:

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burning of Jan Hus in David Holeton and Hana Vlhová-Wörner, "The Second Life of Jan Hus: Liturgy, Commemoration, and Music," in *A Companion to Jan Hus*, 301–310.

16 Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 82, no. 22 dates back to 14th December.

17 Iohannes Hus, *Abiciamus opera tenebrarum*, in *Positiones–recommendationes–sermones*, ed. Anežka Schmidtová (Prague: 1958), 107.

18 Iohannes Hus, *State succincti*, in *Ioannis Hus et Hieronymi Pragensis, confessorum Christi Historia et monumenta II* (hereafter *O II*), ed. M. Flacius Illyricus (Nürnberg: 1558), fol. 34v. Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 129, no. 80.

19 Iohannes Hus, *Super canonicas*, in *O II*, fols. 105r–228v. Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 67, no. 3.

20 Cf. *Homélies sur la première épître de saint Jean. In Iohannis epistulam ad Parthos tractatus decem*, III, 4, ed. John William Mountain (Paris: 2008), 152–154. In his synodal sermon *Digne ambuletis* (1386), Matthew of Cracow called for a similar reflection, but he did not elaborate on the topic of Antichrist. *Mateusza z Krakowa "De praxi Romanae Curiae"*, ed. Władysław Seńko (Wrocław: 1969), 147.

> Let us examine ourselves, oh clergymen, whether we are apostates from the law of Christ, who are not only affected by one sin, but, unlike the first apostate, are involved in sins of the body. Because according to the prophecy of Messiah in the Gospel of Matthew 24: Now wrongdoing increased, because the love in us became cold.[21]

The presence of the Antichrist in the contemporary Church is demonstrated by schism in the Church, improper Eucharistic ministry, and sacrilege. Hus does not yet identify anyone specifically to be Antichrist, speaking instead of Antichrist's servants, sons or predecessors, also referring to the Church of Antichrist. Yet he does not develop the theme of the end of ages at all, returning instead to a critique of contemporary Church practice and elaborating the rhetoric of this critique to amplify its effectiveness (using the antithetical descriptions of the Antichrist's supporters or quoting the 77th sermon of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Super cantica canticorum*). His emphasis on the role of preachers and their imitation of Christ as paradigms for the laity's manner, went hand in hand with his moralistic approach and echoed the hierarchy of Antichrists and the apostasy of the clergy described in John Wyclif's moralistic work.[22]

The archbishop was apparently not provoked by Hus's openness and invited Hus again to preach in front of the synod two years later. In his sermon *State succincti* delivered on 18th October 1407, Hus increased his criticism of the Church and firmly defined schism as the most pressing manifestation of the Antichrist. He continued to emphasize Antichrist's threat to morality supporting it again by quotations from the 33rd sermon from Bernard's *Super Cantica Canticorum* (*State*, fol. 34v). Here again the biblical theme of the sermon (Eph 6:14) allowed him to develop the theme of the spiritual struggle of the priests against the devil, since the call to gird up the loins and to repel the Antichrist's missiles (*State*, fol. 32v) was merely a terminological variation on the spiritual "imitatio Christi" from *Diliges*. Priests, who represent one of the three armies alongside the rulers and the people, is now ceasing to fulfil its

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21 "Quare examinemus nos ipsos, o clerici, an simus Christianae legis apostatae, qui non solum uno percussi crimine, sed supra primum apostatam sumus carnis sceleribus irretiti. Nam secundum Salvatoris prophetiam Matt. 24: Nunc abundavit iniquitas, quia refriguit charitas in nobis [cf. Matth. 24, 12]." Iohannes Hus, *Diliges Dominum Deum*, in *Die Synodalpredigt von Jan Hus Diliges Dominun Deum*, ed. Zuzana Lukšová (Erlangen: 2021), 120.

22 *Iohannis Wyclif Sermones*, vol. I, XXXVIII (*Nisi habundaverit*), ed. Iohannes Loserth (London: 1887), 253.

leadership role, allowing false Christians are taking sides with the armies of the Antichrist (*State*, fol. 32r).[23]

Unfortunately, we have no evidence of what exactly Hus communicated to the laity in the Bethlehem Chapel during the first years of the 15th century.[24] It can be assumed that, for now, he restricted his warnings about Antichrist to an educated audience who understood Latin. In the case of the synods, this was, in itself, a very bold step that had never been taken before. Previous synodal preachers had indeed sharply criticized the decadent morals of their colleagues, occasionally referring to "Antichrist",[25] but these were always only marginal references, primarily a metaphor for evil, not serious reflections on the Antichrist's presence in the world and on its imminent end. It is true that Milíč of Kroměříž had already stepped outside this traditional framework of synodal sermons, but if he was to break the silence about the Antichrist, as Matthias of Janov asserted,[26] he certainly did not do so at the synod. Milíč's interest in apocalypticism, which we know from his writings written at the request of the Inquisitor (especially *Libellus de Antichristo*), tended to seep out only slightly during his synodal sermons, but did not fully manifest itself – probably because Milíč was reluctant to share his eschatological suspicions with anyone other than the Pope. A shift from previous synodal preachers can be seen in his *Audite reges* sermon, mentioning Antichrist only twice,[27] but

23 Similar statements are also found in connection with this biblical theme in Wyclif's *Confortamini in Domino*, in *Iohannis Wyclif Sermones*, vol. III, LV, ed. Iohannes Loserth (Frankfurt am Main: 1966), 473–482.

24 Since only the writings of his listeners have survived (Krmíčková, "K vydávání Husových spisů", 141), which, moreover, because of their homiletic form, contain only a few references to Antichrist. Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 133, n. 84.

25 About these synodal sermons by Mařík Rvačka, Conrad of Ebrach and Štěpán of Kolín from the second half of the 14th century see: Zuzana Lukšová and Lucie Mazalová, "Gradus summus et animus infimus: The contrast between ideas of the ideal priest and the real priest in Prague synodal sermons," *Medieval sermon studies* 64/1 (2020): 48–65.

26 *Matthiae de Janov Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, vol. III, ed. Vlastimil Kybal (Innsbruck: 1911), 356. Matthias of Janov himself also could have been an aspirant to be synodal announcer of the Antichrist's presence, but his three synodal sermons have not survived, nor we have information about their content. Information about their existence can be found in a catalogue preserved in manuscripts I 80 and K 26 preserved at the library of Collegium Nationis Bohemicae. Work on the catalogue likely began before 1420 – *Catalogi librorum vetustissimi Universitatis Pragensis*, eds. Zuzana Silagiová and František Šmahel (Turnhout: 2015), 85, 89, and XLII.

27 Milicius de Chremsir, *Audite reges*, in *Jana Milíče z Kroměříže tři řeči synodní*, ed. Vilém Herold and Milan Mráz (Prague: 1974), 107 and 113. He mentions the Antichrist once in his sermon *Sacerdotes contempserunt*, but this reference is not at all related to the Reformation criticism of the contemporary clergy. According to recent research by Zdeňka Hledíková, "Das Synodal- und Reformpredigtwesen in den Gärungprozessen in

beginning to use some devices typical of later serious Reformation criticism of the Antichrist in the world – Matthew 24:12, the passage on the Antichrist from the 33rd (33:15) and 77th sermon (77:1) of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Super Cantica Canticorum*.[28] Jan Hus was the first to appear in front of the synod with the real revelation of the presence of Antichrist in the contemporary Church. This was a bold step, not least because the official Church, including the theological faculty, did not comment on the presence of the Antichrist in the world. Much later, in 1412, when it had to comment on this issue because of the long-standing disputes with Hus over Wyclif, it resolutely excluded the presence of Antichrist in the world: "According the experience, it is the explicit error to say that in these days there is a great Antichrist who reigns and who according to the faith of the Church and according to the Holy Scripture and the holy doctors shall come at the end of ages."[29] The official Church could not admit that it itself was disturbed by such evil.

As the conflicts between the Reformation party and the official Church escalated, especially over the prohibitions against reading and collecting Wyclif's books, Hus concretized Antichrist's manifestations, identifying him with specific Church leaders. Since 1410 he had seen Antichrist in Archbishop Zbyněk Zajíc of Hazmburk, because of the archbishop's commands to burn Wyclif's books[30] and because of prohibitions against criticizing Church leaders in public sermons. Since 1411 Antichrist was evident also in the sinful pope, especially because of John XXIII's improper indulgence practices (beginning with the pope's decision to grant indulgences on 9 October 1411).[31] From about 1413 until the Council of Constance Hus identified Antichrist within his accusers, who reproached him for his adherence to Wyclif's teaching and his disrespect for

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spätmittelalterlichen Böhmen", *Przegląd Tomistyczny* 22 (2016): 195, Milíč delivered these three sermons between 1365 and 1368, with the *Audite reges* most likely being delivered in 1368. This could we confirm by the growing criticism of the Antichrist.

28 *Audite*, 113 and 110.

29 "Item quod his diebus sit ille magnus Anticristus et regnet, qui secundum fidem ecclesie et secundum Sacram scripturam et sanctos doctores in fine seculi est venturus, est error evidens secundum experienciam." Prague, National Library XI E 3, fol. 115v, available also in a non-critical old edition: "Universitatis studii Pragensis judicium de articulis Joannis Wiclef, regis jussu ab archiepiscopo denuo publicandum (Mendici, 1412, 10. Jul.)", in *Documenta Mag. Ioannis Hus vitam, doctrinam, causam in Constantiensi concilio actam et controversias de religione in Bohemia annis 1403–1418 illustrantia*, ed. František Palacký (Prague: 1869), 455.

30 E.g. *Korespondence*, 83, no. 24. About Wyclif's teaching and books in the Bohemain lands of the 15th and 16th centuries: Stephen Lahey, "Wyclif in Bohemia," in *A Companion to the Hussites*, 63–98.

31 E.g. *Korespondence*, letter to Křišťan of Prachatice, spring 1413, 165 or 147, no. 60.

the Church and the Pope.[32] The more Hus lost confidence in the representatives of the Church, the more often he identified them with Antichrist. This can also be seen in rhetorically rich criticism of them in some Czech works – from 1412 intensively in Hus's correspondence and a year later in the *Česká nedělní Postila* (Czech Sunday Postil, 1413).[33] However, the popular demonstrations in Prague (10th July 1412) against the sacrilege of preachers, which ended rather unhappily with the execution of three young men whose deaths were perceived by Hus's party as martyrdom, suggest that Hus's party had been successfully influencing the mindset of common people for much longer.

Unlike Hus's Antichrist critique, the apocalyptic aspect of his teaching is not so well attested by sources, or even by adherence to a longer textual tradition. Even the relatively rich apocalyptic vocabulary of his writings fails to make the whole of his eschatology apocalyptic, and the overall assessment of his eschatology as largely non-apocalyptic and focused on the present life or the living remains valid.[34] This is due to the prevalence of moralistic considerations of the Antichrist functioning as "memento mori," and thus Hus approaches Wyclif's moralistic critique rather than the apocalypticism of Milíč of Kroměříž and Matthias of Janov. Yet it is still possible to evaluate the function of apocalyptic terms in his work and perceive its significance.

There are only a few extensive passages devoted to the end of the world, or even to the interpretation of verses from the Apocalypse, and their use in the vast majority of cases is not based on Hus's interest in the end of the world, but rather on the feast for which the biblical theme with an apocalyptic motif was fixed. This is the case of the university sermon *Confirmate corda vestra* from 1409 on the expectation of the coming of the Lord (Iac 5:8) or the sermon *Spiritum nolite extinguere* delivered at the university mass on Pentecost 1410 (1 Th 2:19), in which Hus relies on Apocalypse 16:14–16 and the gloss on that passage in an attempt to explain the contrast between good and evil spirits. Both sermons, however, present only a standard interpretation of these biblical passages and do not develop the apocalypticism, serving instead as a stimulus to correct current behavior and to guide their listeners to salvation.

The situation is somewhat different in Hus' correspondence, in which we find in several letters small apocalyptic references associated to an explicitly reformative criticism of the current situation in the Church. In a letter to Jan

32 E.g. *Korespondence*, letter to Křišťan of Prachatice, spring 1413, 163, no. 58.

33 E.g. *Česká nedělní postila. Vyloženie svatých čtení nedělních*, ed. Jiří Daňhelka (Prague: 1992), 179, no. 20.

34 This evaluation was firstly presented by Amedeo Molnár, "Eschatologická nadějnost počínající české reformace," *Křesťanská revue* 21/6 (1954), 182.

of Chlum written on 29th June 1415, Hus writes in response to a now unknown letter about the apocalyptic harlot, by which he means the gathering of opponents at Constance: "How the iniquity of the great harlot is and will be revealed, i.e. the pernicious congregation, spoken of in the Apocalypse."[35] In a letter to the citizens of Prague from 16th November 1414 (*Korespondence*, 224, no. 100) and to friends in Bohemia from 24th June 1414 (*Korespondence*, 305–6, no. 147), that is, letters addressed to the general public, we encounter references to the Day of Judgment as an incentive to persevere in the fight against Antichrist. Similarly in the second sermon of the *Česká nedělní postila* – its main biblical theme, Luke 21:25–33, with its references to the great signs in the sun, moon, and stars, is again given by the feast, but this has happened several times in Hus's work,[36] and only here does Hus suddenly relate this passage to a specific critique of the present age (pp. 67–68). He connected this with the current criticism of the Pope for the way indulgences are granted and with the events in Moravia in 1412, with the criticism of the prohibition of burials, baptisms, confession, and the body of God: "This is the great tribulation of which Messiah says 'there shall be a great tribulation, such as never was from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be in the future' (…)".[37] Such comments are still very rare within Hus's vast oeuvre and, as Pavlína Cermanová has written, Hus's apocalyptic vocabulary serves mainly to mark the enemy, define one's own identity, and declare the need for reform.[38] They still bring listeners and readers back to their lives from the very end of the world.

The calculations of the important end-time milestones characterizing the works of Milíč of Kroměříž and Matthias of Janov, are in Hus's work replaced by the very broad concept of the end-time, "tempora novissima", according to his *Sermones de tempore, qui collecta dicuntur* (1404–5), where Hus merely repeats Wyclif's words: "Know that the whole time from the ascension of the Lord until the Day of Judgment is called the end of the age according to its parts, because we must be serious in our manners according to the end of times, so that as we

35 "(…) quomodo meretricis magne, id est malignantis congregacionis, de qua in Apokalypsi, denudatur iniquitas et denudabitur (…)" – *Korespondence*, 331, no. 161.

36 *Spisy M. Jana Husi, č. 4–6. Super IV Sententiarum*, ed. Václav Flajšhans (Prague: 1904–1906), IV, XLVIII, 729; *Sermones de tempore, qui collecta dicuntur*, III, ed. A. Schmidtová (Prague: 1959), 32–38; *Leccionarium bipartitum – Pars hiemalis*, ed. Anežka Vidmanová-Schmidtová (Prague: 988), IV, 66–75; *Postilla adumbrata*, ed. Bohumil Ryba, reedition (Prague: 2015), 24–27.

37 "A to jest ono náramné trápenie, o němž die spasitel, že 'bude tehdy trápenie veliké, kaké nikdy nebylo od počátka světa až dotud, aniž bude' (…)" – *Česká nedělní postila*, 69.

38 Pavlína Cermanová, "Využití apokalyptických figur v díle Jana Husa," in *Jan Hus 1415*, 25.

approach the end, so much more should we be occupied with worldly things and resist the laws of the devil and the Antichrist."[39]

The real apocalyptic level of Hus' eschatology lies in experiencing his role as a warrior at the end of ages, both from his own perspective and from the perspective of his supporters.[40] As the number of enemies increased, and as Hus increasingly believed that Antichrist was attack on him directly, this role became intertwined with that of the God's martyr. This culminated in imprisonment at Constance, and from the perspective of Hus' contemporaries, it added to his reputation as the second prophet Elijah, reproducing the story of Milíč. The role of the preacher, which had already been emphasized by the pre-Hus synodal preachers, thus helped to create a completely new tradition in the Czech lands thanks to Milíč, Hus and their admirers. The story of Hus is unique, however, in that Hus himself was aware that this role belonged to him and that it was irreplaceable. His letters especially reveal that he also considered himself a martyr, one of the cardinal figures of the end of the world, which partly explains his will not recall during the Constance trial. This is most clearly illustrated by the following excerpts from his letters.

In his letter to Křišťan of Prachatice from the end of 1412 Hus even writes in allusion to the apocalyptic eagle: "The Goose also must needs flap his wings against the wings of Behemoth, and against his tail, which always conceals the abomination of the beast Antichrist (…) Woe be to me, then, if I shall not preach, weep, and write against such an abomination! Woe is me! See to it yourself also. To whom is there not woe? The flying eagle cries: woe, woe, woe to the men that dwell upon the earth!"[41]

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39 This place was firstly mentioned by Jana Nechutová, "Hus a eschatologie," *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity* E 13 (1968): 187. "Et scias, quod 'totum tempus ab ascensione Domini usque ad diem iudicii vocatur secundum singulas partes eius finis alicuius seculi, nam corespondenter ad etatem ultimam seculi debemus gravitatem servare in moribus', ut, de quanto accedimus ad finem propinquius, de tanto minus secularia curemus et forcius dyaboli et Anticristi resistamus legibus (…)" – *Sermones de tempore*, ed. Anežka Schmidtová (Prague: 1959), 401. Quotation is from Wyclif's *Sermones*, vol. III, XXXXIII, 367.

40 More about the Constance process and execution of Jan Hus: Sebastián Provvidente, "Hus's Trial in Constance: Disputatio Aut Inquisitio," in *A Companion to Jan Hus*, 254–288.

41 *The Letters of John Hus*, trans. Herbert B. Workman and R. Martin Pope (London: 1904), 118–119. Latin original: "Et oportet, quod Auca alas moveat contra alas Vehemot et contra caudam, que semper cooperit abhominacionem bestie Antichristi (…) Ve mihi ergo, si super ista abhominacione non predicavero, non flevero et non scripsero. [cf. 1 Cor. 9, 16] Michi ve, vos videritis, cui non est ve. Clamat aquila volitans: 'Ve, ve, ve hominibus habitantibus in terra!' [cf. Apoc. 8, 13]". *Korespondence*, 154, no. 52 from an unknown place. Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 206, no. 190. *Korespondence*, 153 is dating back to 16th October–25th December.

We find serious reflections on his own martyrdom for the first time in 1412 and 1413, but they matured gradually.[42] In a letter to Jan, Cardinal of Rejnštejn, in 1413, he writes explicitly: "I hope, with God's grace, that if need be, I will want to stand against them until the fire burns me. And if I am not able to liberate the truth, at least I don't want to be an enemy of it and stand in the way of consensus through death. It's better to die well than to live badly."[43]

These feelings intensify with his departure for Constance. In a letter from the beginning of October 1414, he bids farewell to the loyal Bohemians and writes: "You know that I faithfully instructed you for a long period, preaching to you the word of God without heresy and without errors, as you are aware: further, I always sought your salvation. I seek it now, and will seek it unto death (…) Therefore, beloved brothers, pray earnestly that it may please Him to grant me perseverance and to keep me undefiled. And if my death contribute aught to Hus glory and your advantage, may it please Him to enable me to meet it without sinful fear. But if it shall be more to your advantage, may it please Him to bring me back to you, guiding me to and fro undefiled, that united a while longer we may be taught His gospel and tear asunder some of Antichrist's nets and leave a good example to our brothers to come."[44]

In anticipation of his own death, in a letter to Václav of Dubá and Jan of Chlum (Constance, prison at Barefoots, after 21st June 1415) Hus speaks of the near future as a time of great persecution: "Awaiting the sentence of the fairest judge in humility (…) As I believe, there will be a great persecution of those who

42 Dušan Coufal's study pointed out that Hus had dealt with the theme of martyrdom to an unusually large extent as early as 1404–5 in his interpretation of the Psalms. "Neznámý postoj Jana Husa k mučednictví v jeho Enarratio Psalmorum (ca. 1405–1407): Na cestě do kruhu zemských svatých," *Časopis Matice moravské* 129 (2010), 241–257, but it is necessary to distinguish between the common inclusion of this theme, including the "loci communes", and, on the other hand, a serious commitment to the martyr's act.

43 "Sed spero cum Dei gracia, quod, si oportuerit, volo me adversus eos usque ad ignem comburendum statuere. Et si ego non possum libertare veritatem per omnia, saltim nolo esse inimicus veritatis et per mortem." [cf. Eccles. 40:29, John. 4:8, 1 Macc. 3:9]. *Korespondence*, 170, no. 63.

44 *The Letters*, trans. Workman and Pope, 146–148. Czech original: "Viete, že sem s vámi po dlúhý čas věrně pracoval, káže vám slovo božie bez kacierstvie a bez bludóv, jakož viete, a má žádost byla, jest i bude až do mé smrti o vaše spasenie (…) Protož, milá bratřie i milé sestry, modlete sě snažně, ať mi ráčí dáti setrvánie, a aby mě ráčil ostřieci od poskvrněnie. A jestli k jeho chvále a k našemu prospěchu má smrt, ať mi ji ráčí dáti bez strachu zlého podstúpiti. Pakli jest k našemu dobrému neb lepšiemu, aby mě vám ráčil navrátiti, i tam i zase veda bez poskvrny, abychom ještě spolu v jeho zákoně sě poučili a Antikrystových sietie něco porušili a budúcím bratřím po sobě dobrý příklad ostavili." *Korespondence*, 206 and 208, no. 87. Bartoš and Spunar, *Soupis*, 218, no. 218; *Korespondence*, 206 is dating back to "after 28th September–before 11th October".

serve God faithfully in the Kingdom of Bohemia, unless the Lord intervenes through the worldly lords."[45] and also hopes that his courage will serve as a model for his followers. The letter written to his friends in Bohemia from the prison at Barefoots on 24th June 1415, which expresses this hope, is exceptional in that it mixes all the themes mentioned above: the Antichrist, moreover, is identified directly as the pope, and the reminder of the end times, which here serve mainly as an agitation for the wider Czech society. And finally Hus writes: "I would, but I trust in God, that he will give others after me braver, and that there are some who will better document the wickedness of Antichrist, and lay down their lives to death for the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you and me eternal joy. Amen. Written in memory of St. John the Baptist in prison in chains, in remembrance that John also was beheaded in prison in chains for the truth of God."[46]

2 Jakoubek v. Stanislav

Jakoubek of Stříbro was the theologian responsible for the formulation of the Four Articles of Prague, issued in 1420 to summarize the main ideas of the growing reform movement.[47] For the next fifteen years, these articles remained the only thing upon which Prague and Tábor could agree. It has been suggested that these articles did not begin as a program for revolution, and that they do not represent a serious theological articulation of the Hussite position.[48] Of these articles, the one that most concerns us is the last, formulated as:

45 "(…) adventum iustissimi iudicis in paciencia expectantes (…) Et ut ego estimo, erit magna persecucio in regno Boemie illorum, qui deo fideliter serviunt, si dominus manum suam non apposuerit per seculares dominos (…)." *Korespondence*, 289, no. 139.

46 "Rád, bych, ale ufám bohu, že dá jiné po mně statečnějšie, i že sú nynie, jenž lépe oznámie zlost Antikristovu a nasadie svých životóv k smrti pro pravdu pána Ježíše Krista, jenž dá vám i mně věčnú radost. Amen. Psán list na svatého Jana Křtitele v žaláři v uokovách v paměti té, že Jan také v žaláři v okovách pro boží pravdu jest sťat." *Korespondence*, 308–309, no. 147.

47 Kamila Veverková, *The Four Articles of Prague within the Public Sphere of Hussite Bohemia* (Lanham: 2021).

48 For the first, see Josef Macek, *Husitské revoluční hnutí* (Prague: 1952), cited in Luboš Lancinger, "Čtyři artikuly pražské a podíl universitních mistrů na jejich vývoji", *Acta Universitatis Carolinae* III, 2 (1962) (The Part played by the University Masters in the Development of the Four Articles of Prague). For the second, see Howard Kaminsky, *A History*, 373, no. 32.

> All mortal sins, and especially those sins committed publicly as well as other contemptible offenses against the law of God, should be properly and reasonably prohibited and prevented in each estate (…) it is not merely the one who commits these sins who is deserving of death, but also those who consent and enable others to commit them (…) every Christian is duty bound to hate all of these sins even as he is obliged to hate their father, who is the devil himself, and he should oppose, reprimand, and prevent them in accordance to his calling.[49]

While one still encounters scholars intent on showing correlates to each of the four articles to something Hus wrote, it has become clear that Jakoubek's primary resource was Matthias of Janov's *Regulae*.[50] Matthias's apocalyptic theology was also integral to Jakoubek's eschatology, as is clear in Jakoubek's *quaestio* on Antichrist.[51] The Articles and Jakoubek's apocalyptic theology were securely connected, which connection became important as tensions grew between Prague and Tábor.

Jakoubek was always conscious of the connection between the immediate needs of society and of the importance the eschaton held in understanding how to meet those needs. In his commentary on the Apocalypse of John, he wrote that John had spoken of three things – what has already occurred, what occurs now, and what will occur. The Spirit speaks through John's voice of the end of things with different senses of immediacy.[52] Pavlína Cermanová

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49 Kamila Veverková, *The Four Articles of Prague*, 10–11. There were at least 30 formulations of the Articles of Prague, and the wording naturally varied, but the responsibility that Christians publicly reprimand sinners never did. F. M. Bartoš, *Manifesty města Prahy z doby husitské* (Prague: 1932) recounts the evolution of the articles.

50 František Šmahel, "Die vier Prager Artikel", in *Kirchliche Reformimpulse des 14/15. Jahrhunderts in Ostmitteleuropa* (Cologne: 2006), 329–339, interprets Hus's call for harmony among the church, nobility, and peasantry as prefiguring the fourth article, while Jana Nechutová and Vilém Herold both see Matthias as the ultimate source for the Articles. See *Matthiae de Janov Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti. Liber V. De corpore Cristi*, eds. Jana Nechutová and Helena Krmíčková (Oldenbourg, Munich: 1993), 8. Vilém Herold, "The Spiritual Background of the Czech Reformation: The Precursors of Jan Hus", in eds. Šmahel and Pavlíček, *A Companion to Jan Hus*, 89.

51 Vlastimil Kybal, "M. Matěj z Janova a M. Jakoubek ze Stříbra", *Český časopis historický XI* (1905), 22–37.

52 "Jan tauž řečí o trojích věcech prorokuje, najprvé o minulých, které se staly, druhé o nynějších, kteréž běžie, a třetie o budauciech. Protož tak mluví Duch zboruom jednak minulých, jednak přitomných věcí dotýkaje, a ještě budaucie věci prorokuje v týchž řečech, které nám mají přijíti." Jakoubek ze Stříbra, *Výklad na Zjevenie Sv. Jana*, ed. František Šimek (Prague: 1932), vol. 1: 150, cited in Pavlína Cermanová, "The Apocalyptic Background of Hussite Radicalism", in *A Companion to the Hussites*, 198.

describes Jakoubek's commentary as intended to emphasize his utraquist sacramental theology, and to counter the radical tendencies of Tábor. Milíč and Matthias of Janov had done well by identifying Antichrist, false prophets, and the Abomination of Desolation with particular offices and people, and Matthias especially had been pleased to regard himself as Enoch to Milíč's Elijah.[53] Jakoubek had embraced Matthias while still a student, filling his own copy of the *Regulae* with notes and quotations from Wyclif and the *Opus Arduum*. In this eschatology, the central texts of Scripture far outshone the works of more familiar, medieval voices such as Joachim of Fiore, Rupert of Deutz, and John of Rupescissa. When Augustine, Jerome, or the pseudo-Chrysostom's *Opus Imperfectum* are featured, they are used to guide the reader to the right sense of Scripture.

While neither Wyclif nor Matthias had much time for more recent Scripture exegesis, they had very different theological approaches. Wyclif was a philosophical theologian who regarded the logical analysis of language, and a right understanding of scholastic metaphysics, as necessary for anyone desiring to preach the truth of the Scripture, demanding that the preacher master the 'logic of Scripture'. He had written extensively on logic and metaphysics, in addition to his works on Scripture. Matthias, on the other hand, had embraced the Christian Neoplatonism of the twelfth-century Paris schools, but said nothing about the logic and philosophy he had studied in Paris. For him, the key to Scripture was the natural code underlying creation, which unlocks Scripture to the faithful reader. With attention to this *regula*, the reader can use Scripture to do God's will, to protect the church from its enemies. Jakoubek had been schooled in Wyclif's philosophy, but was more interested in finding the similarities between Wyclif and Matthias than in abstractions. As we will see in his *quaestio* on Antichrist, this turn from academic theology was the beginning of Jakoubek's readiness to combine eschatology and reform. Jakoubek excelled in preaching, and his sermons express his conviction that the Christian can recover the simplicity and purity of the life of the early Christians. His reputation among Czech scholars of the Hussite theology continues to grow, even if he still runs a distinct second in reputation to Hus.[54]

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53 *Regulae* III, tr. 5, Dist. 11, c. 5, 356–357.

54 František Michálek Bartoš, *Literární činnost Jakoubka ze Stříbra* (Prague: 1925) contains a catalogue of his works, see also more recently Jindřich Marek, *Jakoubek ze Stříbra a počátky utrakvistického kazatelství v českých zemích* (Prague: 2011) for a survey of his sermon postilla, and Pavel Soukup, *Reformní kazatelství a Jakoubek ze Stříbra* (Prague: 2011) for an analysis of Jakoubek's preaching.

In 1412, Jakoubek of Stříbro, the promising young theologian and associate of Jan Hus, published his *Quaestio 'Utrum sicut ex Scriptura plane constat Christum in plenitudine temporis personaliter advenisse, ita evidenter sit deducibile ex eadem Antichristum in complemento seculi propria venire in persona'*.[55] At the time, the theologians associated with Hus were responding vigorously to the recent condemnation of Wyclif in Prague. Foremost among their opponents was their *quondam magister*, Stanislav of Znojmo. Stanislav had once been the brightest light among the Bohemian masters who had advocated Wycliffism in Prague, but had been called to Pisa in 1409, where he agreed that he had been wrong about Wyclif. When he returned to Prague, he became one of his students' most zealous opponents. Upon encountering Jakoubek's *quaestio*, Stanislav responded with a compelling and clearly reasoned refutation. The exchange represents the generational shift that had occurred in Prague in the first decade of the fifteenth century, following the introduction, around 1388, and subsequent condemnation of Wyclif's writings in 1410.[56]

The question is about Scripture's affirmation that Antichrist will come at a time that matches the fullness of time in which Christ will come to end human history. We firmly believe, Jakoubek begins, that Christ will come in the fullness of time, but are left not knowing whether that time is sooner or later. Further, we know that Paul described the Church as Christ's body on earth. Is Antichrist a similar mystical body, or a person? Jakoubek admits it is best to follow Augustine's warning in *De civitate Dei* 11.20 and avoid trying to identify him, but the events of the present compel him to make the attempt. We are warned that many will come teaching heresies and claiming ecclesial authority, which is certainly happening now; would not Augustine agree? One of Augustine's opponents, Tyconius the Donatist, had argued that Antichrist is always present, which suggests that his presence does not indicate the end times.[57] But neither does it preclude the possibility. The connection between the presence of Antichrist and the coming of the End times has been distant until now, Jakoubek suggests, but circumstances have changed so terribly as to

55 Jitka Sedláčková, *Jakoubek ze Stříbra a jeho kvestie o Antikristu* (edice), unpublished thesis, Masarykova universita (Brno: 2001); see also Pavel Spunar, *Repertorium auctorum Bohemorum provectum idearum post Universitatem Pragensem conditam illustrans* (Warsaw, Prague: 1985), Tomus 1: 215, entry 563; F. M. Bartoš, *Literární činnost M. Jakoubka ze Stříbra*, 26, no. 25.

56 František Šmahel, "Wyclif's Fortune in Hussite Bohemia", in his *The Charles University in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: 2007), 467–489.

57 Karel Skalický, "Církev Kristova a církev Antikristova v teologii Matěje z Janova", in *Mistr Matěj z Janova ve své a v naší době*, eds. Jan B. Lášek and Karel Skalický (Prague: 2002), 47–69.

suggest that Antichrist's increased activity indicates the coming eschaton. The time has come to depart from Augustine's advice, and to identify Antichrist.

Jakoubek reproduces generous portions from Matthias to establish that Antichrist will be a sustained contrariety to Christ dwelling throughout Christianity, identifiable by prophets capable of seeing past false Christianity. The time may have arrived to unmask the deceiver.[58] But embedded in his reasoning is a problem. If one hears the words of warning, and heeds them, so much the better. But if one hears them, and dismisses them, one runs the risk of being Antichrist, or at least, being fooled by Antichrist. Jakoubek recognizes this issue, warns that it is possible that the time of Antichrist is at hand.[59] Anyone who would rule this out must be motivated by the desire to draw us away from the truth. They think with the mind of Antichrist:

> The last corrollary I have set in the schools is proven preserving better information, that this highest Antichrist personally is come, is proven thus, that he comes and that the same is wholly appropriate. For from the faith this is held through the highest that just as Jesus crucified has gathered properly first the church in unity, so that when He comes, He may gather to Him all who are disposed to Him, thus Antichrist is most properly in the same way set to disperse, contradicting Him, according to Luke 11[:23]. Who does not gather with me, scatters. All who gather in one man through predilection and divine peace just as I for my part, is known through this, [and] all who scatter men from one another through envy and contention are my adversaries, namely are at the same time proven to be Antichrist through sin.[60]

58 XI D 5, fol. 173v.

59 XI D 5, fol. 174v: "Cum ergo iam fuit dudum talis dicessio a cruce Ihesu Christi et a iusticia, que est per crucem et in cruce completa per Dei filium ad iustificaciones alias multiplices, est discessio a mandatis Dei ad mandata et invenciones atque doctrinas hominum et discessio a veritate vite et doctrine Christi et suorum apostolorum ad fabulas et seculi vanitates, que prophetata est fieri in tempore Antichristi, propter quod non videtur amplius expectandum, quod unus alias veniat Antichristus, quoniam iam venit in summa eius plenitudine etc. et est in foribus."

60 XI D 5, fol. 173r–v: "Conclusionem ultimam posui. Probatur salva meliori informacione, quod ille iam Anticristus summus personaliter venit. Probatur primo sic, quod videlicet iam advenit et quod hoc tempus sit sibi proprie proprium. Nam ex fide pro firmo hoc habetur, quod sicut Ihesu crucifixi est proprie proprium ecclesiam in unitatem congregare, propter hoc enim venit et propter hoc incarnatus est, ut dispersas oves suas ad unum recolligat, ita Antichristi est maxime poprium eandem disgregare, iuxta illud Luce XI, 'Qui non colligit mecum, dispergit,' quasi dicat: Omnis, qui colligit in unum homines per dileccionem et pacem divinam sicud ego, ex parte mei esse. Per hoc cognoscitur, et omnis,

Here Jakoubek is continuing to cite Matthias, but soon he turns to Milíč introducing the theme of *discessio*, the coming apart of the unity of the Church, that dominates the argument of all three writers.[61] Wherever one looks, this separation is evident in the church, separation from love and hope, separation from God's commands, separation between the guidance of the Spirit and human laws. Milíč said, "You should know from this, that the separation predicted by the Apostle is at hand, so the moment is here and the day of judgment is close."[62]

Later that same year, Stanislav of Znojmo formulated his *Tractatus de Antichristo contra Magistrum Jacobellum*, which exists in ÖNB 4749 112r–145v, and in excerpts in Třeboň St.Archive A 16 423v–427.[63] He patiently examines the philosophical concepts Jakoubek has used to present his reasoning, describes the various approaches the authorities have taken to address the ancient fear of Antichrist, and ultimately concludes that certainty about the end times seems unjustifiable. Identifying a given pope as Antichrist is at best premature, and more than likely interferes with the Christian life. Did Jesus not warn all His followers to stay alert? The teaching that has guided the church for centuries would have to have been false all along if we are to believe that a small number have had his advent prophetically revealed in private illumination. Jakoubek conflates the mystic and literal senses of Scripture and constructs an illogical Antichrist, at once pope, who by definition is not Christ's equal, but His vicar, yet a pope prepared to declare himself Christ, and so ready to destroy his office altogether. If the pope were to set himself up to take Christ's place, he would have to seem as humble and pure as Christ Himself, making Christ seem to be the imposter. The pope encourages baptisms and faithful lives and does nothing to discourage the efficacy of the sacraments and the preaching of the gospels, so Christ's church is not frustrated by the opposition of its leadership.

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qui dissipat homines a seipsis per invidiam et contencionem, adversarius meus, videlicet Anticristus peccato esse conprobatur." The text is preserved also in Ms. x E 24, fol. 236r and Ms. 108, fol. 43r.

61 Kybal, "M. Matěj z Janova a M. Jakoubek ze Stříbra", 32: "Totéž možno říci i o třetí a poslední konklusi Jakoubkově, podle níž nejvyšší Antikrist již přišel osobně na svět. Jakoubek dokazuje tuto konklusi třemi důvody, z nichž první a třetí jsou v podstatě vzaty z Matěje z Janova."

62 *Regulae* III, 377: "Tu autem scias: Novissima hora est et dies instat iudicii ex eo, quia discessio predicta ab apostolo venit (…)"

63 Jan Sedlák, "Spis Stanislava ze Znojma De Antichristo", *Hlídka* 24/1 (1907), reprinted in *Miscellanea husitica Ioannis Sedlák* (Prague: 1996, 120–124), provides a brief description of the treatise. Sedlák reflects that apocalypticism was already a dangerous subject, but that Jakoubek's readiness to associate it with a criticism of the church hierarchy was extremely dangerous.

This summary dates to 1464, suggesting some continued Catholic respect for Stanislav, and anger towards "Jakoubek and with him many Taborites".[64]

Apocalypticism and Christian reform have been linked since the first century of the Common Era. Bernard McGinn lists four species of apocalyptic reform literature prevalent between 1100 and 1500. These include reform based in the top-down model developed during the papacy of Gregory VII, a chiliastic reform developed by the Calabrian Abbot Joachim of Fiore, the Byzantine literature anticipating the appearance of a triumphant Christian Caesar, and a corresponding Latin tradition envisioning the coming of an Angelic Pope.[65] The Bohemian reform movement fits roughly into the Joachite model, with its heavy emphasis on the immediacy of Antichrist and the danger it poses to the Church. But Joachim foresaw a coming end to his age, characterized by an end to a church divided into clergy and laity, and a New Age of the Holy Spirit. Jakoubek and Biskupec were much less sanguine about the immediate future. A harmonious Christian community is possible for each, but not without a vigilant readiness to prosecute and punish sin in public. The two were by no means in agreement about the methods, though. Jakoubek was horrified by the Taborite readiness to employ violence so readily, but Tábor and Prague remained linked together in part because of the inclusion of public punishment of sin among the Four Articles of Prague. The two Hussite branches agreed on little else, but a commitment to free preaching, disendowment of the clergy, lay access to both elements of Eucharist, and the publich punishment of sin held Tábor and Prague together. Jakoubek was instrumental in the formulation of these Articles, and they lasted through the eventual Taborite defeat at Lipany becoming the Compactata in 1435.

The great threat Antichrist and the Church's enemies posed Christians demanded stern measures. "Rectors spiritual as much as temporal ought stand diligently in helping to prohibit adultery, fornication, drunkenness, blasphemy, greed, and tavern games (…) so that God's will is pleased (…) when they do not do this in communities, they are in as great danger as the people are."[66]

64 Třeboň St.Ar. A 16 425 r bottom margin.

65 Bernard McGinn, "Apocalypticism and Church Reform", in his *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 2 (New York: 2000), 81.

66 "Rectores ergo tam spirituales quam temporales debent simul se iuvando instare diligenter ad prohibendum adulteria, fornicaciones, crapulas et ebrietates, avaros et blasphemos ludos publicanorum et cetera capitalia, quia voluntas Dei est bene placens, et ad hoc plebibus positi sunt presidentes in edificationem, scilicet non in destruccionem spiritualem, et quamdiu hec in communitatibus non facient, tamdiu maiores in plebe et cum plebe sunt in periculis dampnacionis." Jakoubek, VIII F 2, fol. 105r, preserved also in VII E 6, fol. 6r.

Jakoubek certainly developed his position from that formulated by Matthias in *Regulae* II, "It is useful," Matthias wrote, "in general to expose hypocrites (…) so that the simplicity of the common people not be squandered by rabid wolves, but that they may know to what they should adhere, and of whose advice they should be wary."[67]

Jakoubek's lengthy Czech commentary on the Apocalypse of John illustrates the Hussite readiness to use eschatology as a vehicle for reform.[68] Cermanová describes the text as intended primarily to advocate the utraquist position while arguing against Tábor's readiness to employ excessive violence to further the acceptance of their overly simplistic reform theology. Among Jakoubek's catalog of their egregious mistakes, the Taborite readiness to denigrate Eucharist receives particular condemnation. The utraquist position, which Jakoubek had developed with Nicholas of Dresden in 1414, had become the central tenet of the Prague Hussite theology by 1420, when he began writing his Apocalypse Commentary.[69] Along with his arguments for the right reception of the sacrament, respect for its power, and centrality of its function within the church, Jakoubek describes a church that combines the emphasis on Election from Wyclif, and the composition of the "true church" from Matthias. Both regarded the identity of the church as grounded in the direct connection of its head, Christ, to each of its members, but Jakoubek followed Matthias in arguing that one can learn to recognize those whose membership is false.[70] This is the reason why the public punishment of sin is so important, to convince the people that the appetites of the flesh lead to mortal sin and the death of the soul. Such punishment, Jakoubek continues, should be regarded as an opportunity for redemptive suffering, and the happiness and success the world offers must be recognized as injurious, if not deadly to a faithful life. "And it comes to those who have the grace of the Lord in themselves, that all the bereaved come to their benefit, to guarding themselves more diligently, and such people know how to forgive other sinners mercifully, tending to see that they themselves need mercy."[71] Jakoubek continues with tropes familiar to readers of Matthias

67 *Regulae* II, R. 4, c. 8, 283.

68 Pavlína Cermanová, "Jakoubek of Stříbro's Czech Výklad na Zjevenie and its Latin Reception in Hussite Exegetical Texts", *Listy filologické* CXLI (2018), 45–73.

69 The origins of the utraquist position has been a contested issue, see Petra Mutlová, "Major Hussite Theologians before the Compactata", in *A Companion to the Hussites*, 119.

70 Jakoubek ze Stříbra, *Výklad na Zjevenie Sv. Jana*, ed. František Šimek (Prague: 1932), vol. 1, xxiv.

71 "A to těm přichází, kteríž mají milost Paně v sobě, že všichni zámutkové přicházejí jim k prospěchu, k ostrahování sebe pilnějšímu, a takoví umějí jiným trpícím shověti, milosrdní bývají vidúce, že sami potřebují, Páně milosrdenstvie." Ibid., 36. 95–100.

and Wyclif, including the need for priests to embody Christian virtues, the need of the laity for these examples, the evils of clerical property ownership, and the emphasis upon the law of love that supersedes all other law. Following Matthias in *Regulae* III.6, where he addresses the Abomination of Desolation, Jakoubek adopts a notably misogynistic tone, explaining that the frequent references to prostitutes and other female figures in the *Apocalypse*, and figures like Jezebel elsewhere in Scripture, should be understood not to be about women as such, but references to the softness and weakness to which sin disposes a Christian.[72]

3 Tábor

The story of Tábor lies at the heart of the Hussite phenomenon in Bohemia. For several 20th-century historians, the essence of Hussitism was Tábor. Howard Kaminsky lists himself, Josef Macek, and Robert Kalivoda among them, all strongly influenced by the Soviet era's identification of Tábor as proto-Marxists.[73] Tábor's readiness to destroy social divisions, to eradicate private property ownership, and to compel Christians to live by a simple and strict law code seemed ideally suited to Soviet leaders' intent on arguing that their ideology had roots in Czechoslovakia's history. So, too, was Tábor's chiliastic theology, which is analogous to the Leninist conviction that a confrontation with a virulent capitalist power threatened the Soviet state, and both regarded the use of violence and terror as legitimate instruments of constructing a "holy" society to meet the coming emergency.[74]

Laurence (Vavřinec) of Březová captures this eschatological urgency in his chronicle of the Hussite movement, the only contemporary Bohemian account. As more people began to gather in central south Bohemia in the summer of 1419, when the revolution began in Prague, a distinctly puritanical zeal began

72 Ibid., 129. 69.

73 Kaminsky, *A History*, 4.

74 The Czech literature on the phenomenon of Tábor is considerable. The Hussite museum in Tábor has published the journal *Husitský Tábor* since the 1970s, and houses a large archive of primary sources and scholarship on its history. In English, Kaminsky's history remains excellent for Tábor's beginnings, while F. M. Bartoš's *The Hussite Revolution 1424–1435*, trans. John M. Klassen (New York: 1986), which is the second half of his classic *Husitská Revoluce* of 1965 describes its later fate, up to the end of the conflict. See also Šmahel's *Die Hussitische Revolution* (Hannover: 2002), and Josef Macek, *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí* (Prague: 1952, 1955), 2 vols. Stephen Lahey, *The Hussites* (Leeds: 2019) provides a brief overview.

to grow in the fortified town they christened Tábor. They renounced everything they regarded as artificial in Christianity, such as religious images, canon law, auditory confession, ornate vestments, fasting, saint's days, and praying to saints. Laurence describes the reform movement in Prague as regarding Tábor as prideful and purposefully divisive. He reports a set of Taborite articles, published by Martin 'Loquis' Húska and Jan of Jičín in 1420. They begin with the warning that the age of Christ's judgement is fast approaching, "with no time for mercy, but only for revenge and retribution with fire and sword."[75] Those who impede the law of Christ must be stopped immediately, using all the zeal and anger one can summon. "During this time of vengeance, every faithful person, even a priest, who holds back his physical sword from the blood of his enemies of the law of Christ is cursed."[76] This age of vengeance calls for the destruction of all towns and cities that have strayed from the laws of the gospels, just as had happened with Sodom. The second coming will inaugurate a new age without sin and scandal, more harmonious than the time of the apostolic church. Laurence observes that "they were saying that this would happen in a short time, in a few years, so that some of us would still be alive to see the saints of God rising up again, and among them, Master Jan Hus, because the Lord God will shorten this present time of revenge (…)"[77]

The immediacy of the eschaton demands that the church purify itself and unite, shrugging off the centuries of accumulated ornaments devised by human greed. Laurence recounts this Taborite concern as he encountered it, at times amounting to little more than a steady procession of Scripture passages.

For in addition, the days of the saints will be renewed, as in the beginning, so also at the beginning. The saints will be the heirs of the early church, just as from the beginning, according to Ecclesiastes 36:13. They will be, just as they were, since they had not been banished, it is written in Zechariah 10:6. They will turn back to their country, says Jeremiah 23:3. They will be sown and they will grow and inhabit the mountains, as in the beginning, according to Ezekiel 36:11.[78]

The Taborite doctrine infected the thoughts and hearts of many, both in Tábor and in Prague, Laurence said, and this chiliastic enthusiasm found a vigorous leader in Prague – Jan Želivský, a gifted preacher and demagogue. Želivský drew followers like moths to a flame, thanks to his readiness to ridicule

75 *Origins of the Hussite Uprising: The Chronicle of Laurence of Březová (1414–1421)*, trans. Thomas A. Fudge (Oxford: 2020), 134.

76 Ibid., 135.

77 Ibid., 136.

78 Ibid., 143.

anyone in power. "The wise men of this world, the masters and the prelates," Želivský explained, "magnify the kingdom of the Antichrist."[79] Initially one of the important figures in the Hussite movement, Želivský, quickly became powerful, leading the more cautious Prague Hussites to plan his downfall. This they accomplished in March 1422, when they beheaded him in the courtyard of Bethlehem chapel. This illustrates the divisive role Taborite apocalypticism had introduced into Hussite reform. The first years of the movement were fraught with theological arguments about the immediacy of Christ's coming and the severity necessary to the reformers' preparation for His arrival. This apocalypticism did not continue to burn with the same heat in Tábor and in Prague as the movement developed, and it was not long before all that held the two branches together was a commitment to the Articles of Prague of 1420. The fourth article would become a source of some controversy, as Tábor's readiness to use widespread looting and destruction as part of its program to punish mortal sin increased.

The immediate source for the Fourth Article, on the public punishment of mortal sin, is arguably Matthias of Janov's *Regulae* III, in his treatise on Antichrist. This treatise, an extensive survey of the signs of the age of Antichrist, the body of Antichrist and its many members, and the horrendous evils it perpetrates, is one of the most extensive accounts of the great enemy of the medieval period. Matthias includes William of St. Amour's *Tractatus de periculis novissimorum temporum* in the treatise, along with extended exegesis of selections from the prophets, and the brief *De Antichristo* of Milíč. The treatise is immediately followed by an equally long discussion of the Abomination of the Desolation and the threats posed to the church by the Meretrix of the Apocalypse of John. In total, these amount to close to a thousand pages in Vlastimil Kybal's edition of the *Regulae*. Early in his description of the dangers of Antichrist, Matthias reflects on the threat it posed the early church. Satan birthed Antichrist not as a Jew or a gentile, but as a pseudo-Christian infiltrating the still small, weak Church. In those days, its leaders did not fear to protect it by publicly ejecting such wickedness. "From which beginning of the church, in my judgment, I may draw from the prophets up to 1200 that every wickedness and manifest mortal sin were punished and eliminated, so that it never proceed in public, nor be valued among the common people."[80]

79 Kaminsky, *A History*, 275.

80 "Et exinde fuit a principio ecclesie iudicio meo, quantum possum elicere ex prophetis, usque ad annos MCC quod omnis iniquitas et peccata mortalia manifesta fuerunt districte punita et extirpata, ita quod nequaquam prodire in publicum vel in commune vulgi valuerunt." *Regulae* III, Tr.5, Dist.5, c.6, 21.

Every crime, he continues, especially public ones, even the smallest, should be corrected immediately, and the evildoer excommunicated without delay. The criminal must never be allowed to regain strength, yet neither should he be revealed. Instead, the wrongdoer should be confronted and expelled secretly, while people sleep.

That Jakoubek read and made note of this is easily established. Jakoubek annotated a copy of selections from *Regulae*, including the whole of the treatise on Antichrist, which is a valuable resource for understanding how he developed his own reading of Matthias. Next to the passage cited, Jakoubek reflects on the reasoning behind the number 1200, which he guesses to be the number of years between the time of the immediacy of Christ to the apostles and his present age.[81] His reasoning behind the formulation of the fourth article is clear in his *Quia lex divina Christianorum*, also known as *De Prostibulo*, and *De Scortis*:

> Because the divine law of Christians both in the world and stainless, through which Christians should keep themselves spotless and look after themselves in this age, this law is of love and of perfect liberty ruling out every servitude to sin, which every Christian is bound to uphold through the observation of commandments (…) and to aid and promote in word and deed anyone according to his calling, and they should impede all mortal sin under penalty of eternal damnation (…) Any Christian community should be holy and should eradicate all sin from within itself, and so God sends the holy to defend it in observance of the commands of God.

These sins are not only those of murder and theft, but include adultery, drunkenness, and games that give rise to blasphemy, and it is not only the sacred and secular authorities that must watch for these abominations. The preacher, he says, must exhort all Christians to vigilance and readiness to eradicate such evils, for "who, other than an infidel, would foster and defend such fornication?"[82] Such a command seems unbearably cruel, Jakoubek continues. To oblige people to punish one another for these sins seems an impossible task, but it remains that God's law is wiser than we can perceive and cannot be gainsaid. When a town's leaders do not take on this responsibility, and

81 ÖNB 3971, fol. 152r.

82 *Qui nisi infidelis auderet tales fornicaciones fovere et defendere?*, Prague, Národní knihovna VIII F 2 fol. 104v, VII E 6, fol. 5r.

zealously stamp out adultery, drunkenness, blasphemy, greed, and lewd tavern games, they are in as great danger as are those who are committing these sins.

It is difficult to avoid concluding that Jakoubek's fervor at the least matches that of Tábor in this, which appears to date to 26 August 1415.[83] By February 1420, that fervor had cooled. His *Noverint universi* describes two ways of employing violence for God. The first, superior way is the fighting method of Jesus, the apostles, martyrs, and other saints. God's power is not realized the way people realize their own power, with swords and physical violence, for as Paul says in Ephesians 6, "our arms are not carnal but spiritual." This way of fighting for God involves discipline, prayer, and dedication to Christ's law of love, and is the way Jakoubek believes all Christians should serve God. The second way, he continues, is far more dangerous. The sword is acceptable only when the fighting is on behalf of a divine cause, with the right intention, inspired by God, and such that when the enemy shows the slightest sign of accepting God's will, the soldier ceases immediately. Too often, though, physical violence is used by those who pretend at holy aims but are really driven by a zeal for cruelty and looting.[84]

Tábor's reputation for zealotry was exacerbated by the appearance of a group of forty foreigners calling themselves "Pickharts" in Prague in 1418. Not long after they arrived, someone, likely Jan Příbram, compiled this list of seven chiliast errors, which accompanied refutations:

1. Those favored by Christ will, in the age to come, and in this life, be free from all sin because their Original Sin will be wiped away.
2. All tribulations suffered by the members of Christ's body in this age will cease.
3. The glory of this new age, which will occur before the general resurrection of the dead, will be even greater than the age of the early church.
4. The Spirit will give gifts to favored Christians in this new age that will be even greater than the gifts described in Scriptures.
5. Rather than relying on human intellect to understand creation, Christ's favored will be illumined by the direct teaching of God.
6. All civil obligations will come to an end.
7. The most perfect law of grace will supersede all human laws.[85]

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83 I have used two of the five extant mss of this, those available online. ÖNB 4555, fol. 132r ends *Explicit tractatus reverendi M. Jacobelli de Miza* (sic!) (…) *anno domini 1415 secunda feria post Bartholomei hora XV est finitus etc.*

84 *Noverint universi* is contained in an appendix to Kaminsky, *A History*, 525–528.

85 This list, *Contra scripta de adventu Christi*, is contained in an appendix to Kaminsky, *A History*, 522–525. Kaminsky, its editor, argues that it mirrors Příbram's *Contra articulos Picardorum* of 1420, suggesting that it is an early version of the tract. Příbram was long a

The list suggests that Příbram was arguing against people convinced not that the eschaton was soon to arrive, but that it was at hand. Laurence of Březová describes a group of forty people arriving in Prague in 1418 whom he calls "Pickharts", likely the same as those Ondřej of Brod describes as "Adamites".[86] This small group seems to have been warmly received in Prague until their avoidance of church services and strange ideas began to become clear. They left Prague, and by 1420 had made a home for themselves, attracting over 400 followers, in South Bohemia. They affiliated themselves with Tábor, and Laurence says that they lived a communal lifestyle defined by sexual license and "many evil things (…) of which it would not be decent to leave posterity a written record."[87] They left no records of their own and were murdered by Žižka in early 1421. Biskupec and Petr Chelčický corresponded about them, and Žižka wrote a letter describing his actions, which Laurence reproduces in his *Chronicle*. Their memory would be forever cemented to Tábor, though, thanks in part to Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's *Historica Bohemica*. Aeneas, later Pius II, was a harsh critic of the Hussite movement, and regarded his experiences in Tábor with particular disgust.[88] He regarded Tábor as containing any kind of heresy imaginable, and recounts a meeting with one Ulrich Rosenburg, who was at one time among the Adamites. There he discovered that many of the female adherents did not feel free, and that they were compelled to go without clothes in all weather. It is difficult to avoid comparing this description with how a contemporary critic would describe a cult.[89]

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member of the more conservative Prague masters in support of the Hussite movement, and would become prominent in the movement after Jakoubek's death. See F. M. Bartoš, *Literární činnost M. Jana Příbrama* (Prague: 1928) for a catalog of Příbram's works.

86 See Laurence of Březová, *Chronicle*, trans. Thomas A. Fudge (Routledge: 2021), 149. Ondřej's treatise was from the standpoint of a contemporary of the first Hussites who regarded the movement with great antipathy. See *Traktát mistra Ondřeje z Brodu o původu husitů*, ed. Jaroslav Kadlec (Tábor: 1980), which contains his *Tractatus de origine Hussitarum*.

87 Laurence of Březová, *Chronicle*, 194.

88 "[Tábor] is a haven or asylum of heretics, for whatever monsters of impiety and blasphemy are uncovered among Christians take refuge here, where they have protection: here there are as many heresies as heads, and there is freedom to believe what one likes", cited in Howard Kaminsky, "Pius Aeneas Among the Taborites", *Church History* 28/3 (1959), 3–31,15 quote.

89 "Audivi ego ex Ulrico Rosensi (…) fuisse apud se viros et mulieres eius secte captivos, et mulieres quidem palam dixisse non esse liberos, qui vestibus et presertim femoralibus uterentur", Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Historia Bohemica Band 1: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe des Lateinischen Textes*, eds. Joseph Hejnic and Hans Rothe (Cologne: 2005), 294. See Jakub Jiří Jukl, *Adamité: Historie a vyhubení husitských naháčů* (Prague: 2014) for an overview of all extant primary sources for the movement; also Cermanová, *Čechy na konci věků*.

Another figure, almost the polar opposite of Piccolomini, regarded the Tábor chiliastic violence with horror. Petr Chelčický, perhaps once a Taborite himself, described how Tábor had become a tool of Satan in his 1421 *O boji duchovním* (On Spiritual Warfare):

> To our great shame and sorrow, we must acknowledge how our brethren have been cleverly seduced by Satan, and how they have departed from Holy Scriptures in strange and unheard-of ideas and acts … And so they have committed many killings and impoverished many people, but they did not judge the world according to their words, for the time predicted with which they terrified people has elapsed, of which they tell them strange things which they collected from many prophets.[90]

Chelčický was described over a century ago as a shadow figure in Bohemian history, and while many of his works have seen recent editions, he remains mysterious. He likely lived in the village of Chelčice in south Bohemia, displays scant familiarity with Latin, and if local records are true, seems not to have been ordained. Yet he was a correspondent of Jakoubek and Biskupec and gives evidence of intimate familiarity with Tábor. He also read widely, displaying deep familiarity with the Bible, with the works of Hus and other reformers, with Wyclif and the ongoing controversies between Tábor and Prague. He had developed a strikingly original social theory evocative of what later centuries would call Anarchism and exhorted his contemporaries to recognize that Jesus unequivocally taught radical pacifism. He produced a *postilla*, a sermon cycle, as well as a remarkable ecclesiological treatise in which he elaborates on the gospel image of Christ's followers as fishers of people.[91]

Murray Wagner observed that while Chelčický's social and ecclesiological views have begun to receive scholarly attention, his apocalypticism has been

90 Petr Chelčický, *O boji duchovním*, ed. Kamil Krofta (Prague: 1911), 27, transl. by Howard Kaminsky in his "Chiliasm and the Hussite Revolution", *Church History* (March 1957), 6/1, 51. See also *On Spiritual Warfare*, trans. Charis Enns, ed. Tom Lock (Oberlin: 2009).

91 Howard Kaminsky, "Peter Chelčický: Treatises on Christianity and Social Order", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, vol. 1, ed. William M. Bowsky (Lincoln Nebraska: 1964) 104–180, provides a biography and translations of *O trojím lidu* (On the Triple Division of Society) and *O církvi svaté* (On the Holy Church). Murray L. Wagner's *Petr Chelčický, A Radical Separatist in Hussite Bohemia* (Ontario: 1983) remains the only full-engtth treatment in English. See Jaroslav Boubín, *Petr Chelčický: Myslitel a reformátor* (Prague: 2005), as well as his recent editions of Chelčický's works, including *Petr Chelčický: Spisy z Pařížského sborníku* (Prague: 2008), *Spisy z Olomouckého sborníku* (Prague: 2016), *Spisy z Kapitulního sborníku* (Prague: 2018), and *Síť víry* (Olomouc: 2011).

less studied.[92] The state of the world, as Chelčický perceived it, was grave. In his best-known work, *The Net of Faith* (*Síť víry*) he regards the Christian world as like a net in the sea of humanity, containing all who would follow Christ. The net is rent by two great holes made by whales, namely the papacy and the empire. Through them, Christ's followers fall away from the Church, back into the sea of worldliness and corruption. The hallmark of these two beasts is the subject of *O šelmě a obrazu jejiem* (*On the Beast and Its Image*), which dates to later in his life, perhaps 1450.[93] At this point, Chelčický was as frustrated with the violence of Tábor as he was with that of Rome. The beast, Antichrist, sets the world against Christ by justifying the laws of human beings as elements of God's law. Antichrist's lies make violence and murder acceptable, legitimates theft and rape, sanctifies the destruction of others' livelihoods. They turn the sacraments into opportunities for robbery, and plunder Scripture to create blasphemous songs. The way to recognize this is to search for the image of the beast within all who would justify this. The sin of Adam, stamped upon all humanity, was redeemed by Christ, allowing Christians to initiate a new life. The image of the beast is found upon people who have claimed to follow Christ, do their best to appear having done so, yet continue to behave sinfully. The hypocrisy of the false Christian is the mark of the beast, Chelčický continues, which can only be overcome through living according to the Gospel law. No amount of preaching or apparent piety can substitute for a life given over to Christ.

The image of the beast is not easy to describe. Discerning hypocrisy in another person is difficult, and opportunity for sin, by lying to oneself about one's own purity. The image acquires for itself the aura of faith, hope, and love, standing radiant before all, inciting fighting and war as though commanding for God. Especially dangerous, then, is the spiritual class, which has the opportunity to exercise such calumnies in its own interests. The image of the beast

92 Wagner, *Petr Chelčický*, 130. Two cycles of treatises contain Chelčický's apocalyptic thought, *On the Beast* (*O šelmě*) and *On Antichrist* (*O Antikristu*). The first contains three (F. Bartoš, "Chelčický a Rokycana", *Listy filologické* 48, 1921: 30–40, 118–135) or four – J. Goll, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder*, vol. II *Peter Chelčický und seine Lehre* (Prague: 1882). Scholars agree that *On the Beast and its Image* (*O šelmě a obrazu jejiem*) is among them. See Eduard Petrů, "Datace traktátu Petra Chelčického O Šelmě a obrazu jejiem", in his "Dvě studie o Petru Chelčickém", *Listy filologické* 89/4 (1966): 398–402. This has been published in Josef Karásek, *Petr Chelčický. Menší spisy*, vol. 1 (Prague: 1891), 39–67. The second contains three treatises, including *The Marks of Antichrist* (*Antikristova poznánie tato sú*) published in Jaroslav Boubín, *Petr Chelčický. Spisy z Pařížského sborníku* (Prague: 2008), 203–210.

93 Petr Chelčický, "Řeč o šelmě a obrazu jejiem", in *Petr Chelčický: Spisy z Olomouckého sborniku*, ed. Jaroslav Boubín (Prague: 2016), 277–303.

is so bound up with the vices of the clergy that Chelčický sees a time, soon to come, when Antichrist will turn upon the priests, bishops, and popes and set kings upon them as dogs upon a victim. The coming age of the church's destruction, he concludes, is near, yet the clergy cannot see it because the nature of Antichrist is deception.

While other Bohemian preachers and reformers aimed to reform the church, Chelčický's sights were set much higher. He aimed to reform society itself, arguing that Antichrist's lies had seeped into the world, justifying the separation of people from one another on the basis of class, wealth, and power. The construction of a society based on the exchange of material goods, the compulsion of people to work for the good of others, the readiness to sacrifice people to further such fictions as noble houses, bits of land, or simply naked greed, all are symptoms of the pervasive success of Antichrist. Chelčický did not develop a systematized approach at reform like the Hussites, but his influence has proven to last. The few Taborites to survive after 1435 eventually gravitated to Chelčický, and would, in time, become the *Unitas Fratrum*, a protestant group that would later come to be known as the Moravians.[94]

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94 For a survey of this development, see Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (Pennsylvania: 2009).

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CHAPTER 8

Listening to John, Rewriting the Book: a Liturgical Reading of Constança de Rabasten's Revelations

Sergi Sancho Fibla

Per la fembre es /entes home (53v:1–12) – By the woman is signified the man[1]

⁘

1 Who Was Constança?

Every reader who approaches the *Revelations* of Constança de Rabastens seems to ask the same question: How could a lay and illiterate woman have acquired this knowledge?[2] Constança was a laywoman of the late fourteenth century who devoted herself entirely to religious life after being widowed. She then began to experience a series of apocalyptic visions that she herself interpreted thanks to "a voice" she heard. We know of these experiences thanks to a text that, it seems, her confessor, Ramon de Sabanach, put into writing. Scholars have been astonished by her insights, not only because of her gender, but also her status as a common layperson. How did Constança come to know the scriptures? We have been told that women were excluded from institutions of higher learning, meaning they did not have direct access to theological knowledge. Yet, such barriers did not prevent them from indirectly accessing

1 All the translations are from Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism: The* Revelations *of Constance of Rabastens by Raymon de Sabanac, and* Life of the Blessed Ursulina of Parma *by Simone Zanacchi* (Toronto: 2010), 65. For the original text, I will directly quote the manuscript in the format (folio: lines).

2 To avoid confusion, I will always refer to Constança's text as *Revelations* and the biblical text as Apocalypse. This article has been made thanks to the financial aid provided by the STARS@UNIPD project "MAGISTRAE – Reassessing Instruction Activities by Religious Women (c. 1250–1550" as well as the projects "SORORES : Les religieuses non cloîtrées en Europe du Sud, XII^{e}–XVIII^{e} siècles"; and "Catálogo de Santas Vivas (1400–1550): Hacia un Corpus completo de un modelo hagiográfico femenino (PID2019-104237GB-I00)."

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that knowledge through non-hegemonic practices. The available sources surrounding women engaged in non-hegemonic knowledge acquisition tend to attribute their learnedness to extraordinary means, such as supernatural phenomena of infused science.[3] Consequently, women were prevalent with the sphere of divine revelation; some were even considered "prophetesses" or "visionaries". What set Constança apart from other visionaries was her literal knowledge of the Apocalypse and the work of exegesis that she performed.

My analysis of Constança's visions is based on a careful reading of *Revelations*, the only surviving text of her dictations. I will avoid the most emphasized aspect of this text by scholars – her participation in the political debates of her time; instead I will concentrate on her knowledge of the Apocalypse.[4] To this end, I will briefly explore what is known about Constança and place it within the context of her time. I will then sketch several details surrounding the manuscript, which will facilitate my analysis of how she experienced her revelations as well as how those revelations overlap with John's text. With this, I intend answer to Constança's knowledge by taking into consideration her participation in different liturgical practices.

Everything we know about Constança comes from some texts that have been preserved in a manuscript that compiled different works by various authors. comes from some texts contained in a manuscript that compiled different works from various authors. Among the 109 folios of this volume,

3 In Christian theology, the concept "infused science" is used for knowledge directly conferred by the divinity on human beings without experience or reflection. For non-hegemonic ways of acquiring knowledge by women, the bibliography is huge. We can mention different fields in which we can see the knowledge and skills acquired by common activities: paramedical practices, administrative literacies, liturgy and theology, or art and craftmanship. See Sylvie Duval, "Scrivere, contare, gestire: I libri di amministrazione dei monasteri femminili fiorentini (1320–1460)," in *Scritture, Carismi, Istituzioni: Percorsi di vita religiosa in età moderna. Studio per Gabriella Zarri*, ed. Concetta Bianca and Anna Scarttigno (Rome: 2018), 85–104; Montserrat Cabré, "Women or Healers? Household Practices and the Categories of Health Care in Late Medieval Iberia," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine. Special issue: Women, Health, and Healing in Early Modern Europe* 82/1 (2008), 18–51; Margot Fassler, Jeffrey Hamburger, Susan Marti, and Eva Schlotheuber, *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning at Paradies bei Soest, 1300–1425: Inscription and Illumination in the Choir Books of a North German Dominican Convent* (Münster: 2017); and Sharon Strocchia, "Knowing Hands: Nuns and the Needle Arts in Renaissance Italy," *Artiste nel chiostro: Produzione artistica nei monasteri femminili in eta moderna* (*Florence, 2015*), special issue of *Memorie Domenicane* 46 (2015): 31–52.

4 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Lat. 5055, fols. 35r–58r. The scholars that have dealt with Constança's revelations have focused on her political goals. A special mention has to be made of Renate Blumenfeld Kosinski's works: *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism 1378–1417* (Pennsylvania: 2006); or "Constance de Rabastens: Politics and Visionary Experience in the Time of the Great Schism," *Mystics Quarterly* 25, 4 (1999), 147–168.

37 speak of Constança. We find: a prologue, her revelations, and some letters. We only know her name thanks to two mentions; one appears in the title of her revelations, added in the 16th century,[5] and the other appears in the body of the text.[6]

I did not find any mention of her outside the text, even upon a thorough investigation. For example, she does not appear in the notarial documents I could consult from Rabastens.[7] That said, two other widows named Constança make an appearance. Constança Erbard is listed on an acquittal from 1369,[8] and Constança d'Ebralh is mentioned in an October 1, 1401, acquittal.[9] On the one hand, Erbard is more than likely not "our" Constança, for she was probably too young at the time of this acquittal. On the other, Ebralh's acquittal transpired 15 years after "our" Constança's incarceration. Furthermore, the latter references a son named Martin de Roquemaure, but we know that Constança's son was a Benedictine monk in the Daurade of Toulouse (41r, 6–7) named Armangau.[10] There are also class issues surrounding the three widows, which further casts doubt upon the notion that our Constança could be either of them.

Constança also does not appear in the "Livre de l'arc," a relatively complete property census for the village of Rabastens and the surrounding area. This is a manuscript of 279 folios that Ernest Nègre dates to around 1374 and 1392, closer to the former than the latter.[11] The *Revelations* seem to cover from 1384

5 The title is in Latin: "Revelationes Constantiae de Rabastens, quae vivebat anno MCCCLXXXIV, cum aliquot litteris ad Inquisitionem fidei" (f.1r). "The Revelations of Constança de Rabastens, who lived in the year 1384, with some letters to the Inquisition of the faith".

6 "Aço qui davall se segueix son les letres les quals madona / Constança tremes, per manament de Deu, al enqueridor" (54v, 17–18). "What follows are the letters that lady Constance transmitted to the inquisitor at God's command." Blumenfeld Kosinski, *Two women*, 67.

7 It is worth saying that there are still many notarial documents to be consulted in the Archives Départamentales du Tarn, so this work will have to be continued.

8 Acquittal made by Bernard de Penne in favour of Constança Erbard, widow of Scot de Roquemaure, September 3rd, 1369. Albi, Archives Départamentales du Tarn, 6 E 3/7, s. (Notaire Vitalis).

9 Acquittal in favor of François Peytavi, Octobre 1st, 1401. Albi, ADT, 6 E 3/41, s. (Notaire Rudelle).

10 There is also no Armangau in the "Livre de l'Arc," which makes sense if Constança's son went to Toulouse at a young age. A daughter is also mentioned in 39v, 11.

11 Ernest Nègre, "Le livre de l'Arc de Rabastens," *Annales du Midi* 74, 58 (1962), 201–209 (202). A more detailed analysis in Patrice Loriato, *Le terroir de Rabastens à la fin du 14e siècle. Étude à partir du "Livre de L'arc"*, PhD Dissertation, Université de Toulouse le Mirail, 1984, 6–8.

to 1386, so Constança lived in the village during the census. The "Livre de l'Arc" estimates the assets of each head of household, up to 263 houses and about 1080 people, including some women who have properties in their own names, especially widows.[12] However, no Constança appears.

The question of Constança's social status is a crucial aspect to approach the modes of transmission of apocalyptic knowledge. In this matter, there does not seem to be a *consensus* concerning Constança. Robert Cabié, in his study of the *Revelations*, argued that both the use of the term "hostal" to refer to her home and the evocation of a private oratory would point to a house of high rank.[13] Madeleine Jeay, for the same reasons, conceives of Constança as "moyenne bourgeoisie urbaine," urban middle class, encompassing her within the "petit peuple."[14] However, I believe that a single mention of "hostal" cannot determine the social status of the prophetess.[15] On one hand, the glossary variations are significant among the various Occitan and Catalan regions and, at this time, the use of this term corresponds more to the concept of an urban house, as opposed to a house with land or an orchard.[16] If we consult the "Livre de l'arc," we can see the large number of "hostals" that existed in the village, which leads us to think that it could not only refer to the high rank classes, but rather to the urban bourgeoisie.[17] As for the oratory mentioned three times, Cabié understood it as a private chapel, which is hard to believe.[18] It should probably be a kneeler and/or a special place in her house dedicated to prayer.

12 The calculations are made by Patrice Loriato, taking into account the articles reported in the book and removing the references to clerics and foreigners. Loriato, also warns that eight pages are missing, so it is only an estimated number. Ibid., 14–15.

13 Robert Cabié, "Une mystique? Réflexions sur Constance de Rabastens," in *La femme dans la vie religieuse du Languedoc (XIII^e–XIV^e siècles). Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 23 (1988), 37–54 (39).

14 Madeleine Jeay, "Marie Robine et Constance de Rabastens: humbles femmes du peuple, guides de princes et de papes," in *Le petit peuple dans l'Occident médiéval. Terminologies, perception, réalités*, ed. Pierre Boglioni, Robert Delort, and Claude Gauvard, (Paris: 2022), 579–594. Online, URL: https://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/14091?lang=en [last accessed: November 2022].

15 39r, 15.

16 Anne-Laure Napoléone, *Figeac au Moyen Age. Les maisons du XII^e au XIV^e siècle*, Phd dissertation (1993), 314.

17 Loriato, *Le terroir de Rabastens*, 15–27.

18 The mentions are in 38r, 8; 38v, 6; 52v, 6.

On the other hand, there are other aspects that distance Constança from the upper classes: the inability to write,[19] the obstacles to communicating with the authorities, or her imprisonment. Yet the fact of living in the village, of dedicating to religious life as a widow, and of being listened to by both clerics and the civil council of the city entails understanding Constança as a citizen in her own right. As Jeay pointed out, she could have belonged to the middle bourgeoisie and/or simply a citizen being invested with a notable spiritual authority. An authority that is proper to that of the "living saints" of the time, who, because of their spiritual disposition, could exert a germane social weight in urban spaces.[20] Like them, Constança also suffers, in some cases, from opprobrium or being treated as mad and demonic.[21] One can indeed appreciate some influences from the lives of saints, especially at the beginning, when the awakening of her visionary capacity, such as episodes of the vision of the devil, the test of chastity, the practice of the meditation of the Passion incorporated into her own bodily suffering, etc.[22] Yet these constitute only a derisory part with respect to the visionary and prophetic character of the text. These two rather hagiographic aspects probably served as an echo of the prologue, that is, to demonstrate the modesty and the "discernment of the spirits" that both Constança and her confessor carried out.

Like other women dedicated to religion at the time, Constança did not live in a convent, nor did she even live in a community. Like the *monache di casa*, some tertiaries, beguines, or *beatas*, she was an active widow, yet we are not told of charitable activities (since the aim of the text is not beatification), but of a life of contemplation: she prays the canonical hours at home and in

19 As I discuss below, Constança's knowledge should not be contingent on the ability to write. However, the fact that she did not know how to write seems evident: "And my father [confessor] wanted to write nothing down except this letter", Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 67. "E mon pare nom ha vulgut res scriu/re sino are aquesta letre" (55r:4–5).

20 See Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500*, (Turin: 1990). Zarri's work has been compared by other scholars, who adopted it for other similar phenomena in other European regions, even for earlier periods.

21 48r, 19–20; 49v, 6–7.

22 For an outline of the parts of medieval hagiographies, with a first phase of initiation (*status inchoantium*) in which trials and ascetic practices allow the acquisition of virtues, see Sergi Sancho Fibla, "Las vidas occitanas de santas tardomedievales: *Sacra infantia*, formación e imitación", Magnificat Cultura i Literatura Medievals, 10 (2023), 337–368; and Ibid., *Escribir y meditar. Las obras de Marguerite d'Oingt, cartuja del siglo XIII* (Madrid: 2018), 244–250.

church, shares a part of this religious life with the Franciscans, and takes an unofficial vow of chastity even while continuing to live in the century.[23]

2 The Context: Schism and War

I will not dwell too long on this aspect, first, because I believe that it has undoubtedly been the most discussed topic about Constança and, second, because it does not have an important place in the objective of this article. Yet, it has an important weight in the text, and it is crucial to mention it in order to contextualize it. The *Revelations* undoubtedly testify to her involvement in the sociopolitical framework of her time, particularly on a universal scale in relation to Christianity and the schism of the West; on a kingdom scale with the Hundred Years' War and, finally on a more regional level, with the conflicts of the Languedoc domains. After the death of King Charles V (1380), Gaston Fébus, Count of Foix-Béarn, was supposed to become the administrator of Languedoc. However, the king's brothers, regents, contravened the will of the deceased king and appointed other allies. Jean de Berry was very unpopular in Languedoc, while Fébus enjoyed great popularity for his military and diplomatic successes. One of these battles took place outside the walls of Rabastens on July 21, 1381, in which Fébus, with the help of his bastard son Yvain de Béarn, defeated a band of *routiers* who had joined soldiers discharged by the Duke of Berry and who were plundering the area.[24]

The Count of Foix was defeated and settled in his territory. It seems that he resigned himself to see Languedoc in the hands of the French crown, waiting for the event to run their course. Constança explicitly shows not only her support but also her admiration for Gaston Fébus. Nevertheless, she also clearly supports the French king within the conflict that had been ongoing for decades in the West: The Hundred Years' War. Constança speaks on different occasions about Flanders, a key territory in this conflict, due to the different revolts against the French positions. Although the French king had clear and strong support for the pope of Avignon, this was not a necessary condition for

23 38v:1–3. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Antonella degl'Innocenti and Francesco Santi, *Scrittrici mistiche europee. Secoli XIV–XV*, 2 (Florence: 2015), 257.

24 See Véronique Lamazou-Duplan, *Signé Fébus Comte de Foix, Prince de Béarn. Marques personnelles, écrits et pouvoir autour de Gaston Fébus* (Paris: 2014); Jean-Pierre Hiver-Bérenguier, *Constance de Rabastens, mystique de Dieu ou de Gaston Febus?* (Toulouse: 1984), 36–37.

Constança to be influenced. The threats and criticisms of the *Revelations* point above all to the pope of Avignon as the great enemy ("l'antipapa de Vinyo"[25]), and she repeatedly advocates the return of the papacy to Rome. Her position has been seen on numerous occasions as contradictory, sometimes with condescension, alleging a lack of understanding on her part. However, if one understands political and spiritual logics as independent issues, her position is reasonable: there are territorial issues on one hand and spiritual issues on the other.

In any case, it is clear that this climate was prone to Constança's eschatological discourse, who is by no means the only one at the time. On the contrary, it is common to find schism and prophecy as associated phenomena.[26] In 1380, the *De falsis prophetis* of Pierre d'Ailly, whose ideas, together with those of Jean Gerson and other ecclesiastics of his time, could have forced the introduction of the discernment of spirits in the prologue of Ramon de Sabanach.[27] In the same period, we find Catherine of Siena, Brigida of Sweden, and Marie Robine with a similar prophetic-political initiative, but these cases allude to characters with a distinct level of education and different spiritual environments.

3 The Manuscript and the Text

In the letter sent to the inquisitor and the collector of Toulouse, dated March 10, 1384, it is clear that the authorities tried to stifle the dissemination of Constança's *Revelations*.[28] However, her testimony was preserved in

25 54r:14. "And the other ship signified the antipope of Avignon and the College of anticardinals as well as their followers …" Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 66.

26 André Vauchez, "La chiesa di fronte al misticismo e al profetismo durante gli ultimi secoli del Medioevo," in *I Laici nel medioevo. Pratiche ed esperienze religiose* (Milano: 1989), 195–307; Roberto Rusconi, *L'attesa della fine. Crisi della società, profezia ed Apocalisse in Italia al tempo del grande scisma d'Occidente (1378–1417)* (Roma: 1979). For a more concrete approach to Constança within the schism, see Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, "Caterina e Robina: profezia e antiprofezia al tempo del Grande Scisma," in *La Roma di santa Caterina da Siena*, ed. M.G. Bianco (Roma: 2001), 229–255; and Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries*.

27 See an early edition: Pierre d'Ailly, *De falsis prophetis appendice dans Iohannis Gersonis opera omnia*, ed. Lud Ellies Du Pin (Antwerp: 1706).

28 "Molt cars senyors, com yo haie haudes moltes revelacions e visions / spirituals axi com sabets, e encare he aquelles axi com debans o mes, / e vosaltres haiats menat a mi que no revel aquelles sino a mon / confessor e a vosaltres, e yo haie moltes veus a vosaltres scrit /

a manuscript *varia* on paper and made public for the first time at the end of the 19th century, the BNF Lat. 5055[29] The nexus for these texts has some tendencies toward prophetic themes, but not completely. It is in fact a very diverse *compendium* with texts on Deuteronomy, notes on Daniel and the Apocalypse, but also others on medicine, moral, a treatise on alchemy, or a collection of astrological texts (f.182–198).[30] As the BNF code reads, these works are all in Latin, except for Constança's text, which is written in a Catalan very close to Occitan, probably from the Pyrenean or Roussillon area.[31] The writing is done by two copyists, both from the end of the 14th century; therefore, it is very close to the experiences to which the text relates. Therefore, we could think, as Cabié advanced,[32] that it is a rewriting of different notes and letters related to Constança, ordered chronologically following the calendar from 1384 to 1386 (see my attempt to unravel the temporal logic of the chapters in Table 8.1).[33]

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e non haie hauda neguna reposta, e mon confessor no vol scriure, / ans aytant quant pot rebuie aquelles …" 57v, 6–11. "Dear Lords, as you know, I have had many revelations and spiritual visions, and I still have them, and as many or even more than before. And you ordered me not to reveal them to anyone but my confessor and you. And I have written to you many times without getting any answer. My confessor does not want to write down anything and rejects [my visions]". Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 71–72.

29 Amédée Pagès and Noël Valois, "Les révélations de Constance de Rabastens et le schisme d'occident (1384–86)," *Annales du Midi* (1896): 241–278.

30 See BNF, URL: https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc63957f [last accessed: November 2022].

31 Undoubtedly, the translation into Catalan opens many avenues of research regarding the interest on the diffusion of the text. It is possible that it was copied in order to contribute to the anti-Avignon propaganda, although we can only make conjectures for the moment.

32 Cabié, "Une mystique?," 38.

33 It is interesting to contrast the part of the letters and that of the chapters referring to the revelations, because it is quite evident, by choice of style and lexicon, that they are written by different authors. For instance, the letter mentions the "antipope" (54r:14), or speaks of the vision as "semblance" (54v:7), concepts whose efferents appear in the *Revelations*, but always with other words.

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
1	Not mentioned, but seems to belong to the same period (Quadragesima of 1384)	Night	Sleeping	Mountain and dead people		Home	Period of testing and formation
2		Night	Meditating	Dead people		Home	
3			Meditating	She felt a great pain in her left arm		Home	
4		Night (midnight)	Meditating	Christ healed his arm		Home	
5		Night	Praying	Man in white silk	Apoc. 3:4–5; 3:18; 6:11; 7:1; 7:14	Home	
6		Night – dawn	Praying – Sleeping	Suffering		Home	
7		Night (after complete)	Praying	Devil in a form of a black cat		Home (oratory)	
8		Night (after matins)	Praying – Sleeping	Two ships, one doomed, the other, saved	Apoc. 8, 9	Home	

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
9		Night	Praying – Sleeping	A chest, rotten outside but resplendent inside	Apoc. 8, 8		
10		Night (after complete)	Praying	Six Angels, chastity		Home (oratory)	
11		–	Attending mass – Praying	She asks for wisdom			
12	Three days and three nights during Easter	Day	Attending mass	"Kiss the ground, not the cross"			First visions between Easter and June
13		Night (after matins)	Praying – Sleeping	Man with white robe carrying a cross. Earthquake	White robes: vid. chapter 5. Earthquake: 6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 11:19; 16:17	Home	
14		Night	Praying – Meditating – Sleeping	Trumpet. Last Judgement. Open sky	Trumpets: Apoc. 1,10; 4,1; 8,1; 8:7; 8,8; 8,10; 8,12; 8:13; 9,1; 9,13, etc. Open sky: Apoc. 19:11	Home	

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
15		Night (complete)	Praying – Sleeping	An augustine monk. Sky on fire. Men hiding in caves	Red moon: Apoc. 6:12. Men hiding in caves: Apoc. 6:12.	Home	
16	Two and a half days (between Easter and Pentecost)	Night (midnight)	Sleeping – Meditating	Open sky – Tree – and 24 old wise men	Old men: Apoc. 4:4; 19:4; 11:16; Tree of life: Apoc. 2,7; 22,2; 22:18. Door of heaven opened: 3,8 3:20; 4:1	Home	
17	Pentecost 1384	Night	Praying – Sleeping	Golden/Blue swans		Home	
18	Trinity Sunday? (June 4)		Praying	Open sky, cloud: "Read the Book of Revelations"	Cloud: Apoc. 1:7; 14:14.	Home	
19		Night – Dawn	Praying – Sleeping	Maiestas + Trinity in a column		Home	
20	13 January, 1384 or 1385? (Flashback? or flash forward?)			Consults people about her revelations (her son, her confessor, the inquisitor, the council)			Period of hestiations

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
21	Mid-october until Easter (1384)			Doubts on whether she had to write or not			
22	8th May	Night (midnight)	Praying	God says her confessor must write her revelations		Home	Visions and political interpretations during May
23	8th May, Monday		Attending mass – elevation of the host	God talks to her about political subjects: Avignon, Flanders.		Saint John's chapel	
24	(8th May, Monday)		Attending major mass	Political vision: The count of Armagnac is a traitor allied to English kingdom			
25	(May 8th, Monday)	Night (complete)	Praying	Ibid.: The count of Armagnac Pilate		Saint James' chapel	

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
26	May 9th, Tuesday	Night (midnight)	Praying	Ibid. God adds: Febus is a red crane that will make the right man rise, the Pope of Rome		Home	
27				"Don't forget to mention the count (of Armagnac)"			
28	Ascension Day (18th May)	Night (complete)		Traitors to the King of France (Bernat d'Ermanyach and his brother)		Saint James' chapel	
29	Saturday after the Ascension Day			People ask her for advise and intercession			
30	Next Sunday, 22th May		Praying after confession – attending mass	Asks for mercy like Mary of Magdala or the people from Ninive	Jonah 3	Saint James' chapel	

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
31	Saint Bartholomew, August 24th; and the day after	? – Night (before complete)	Praying	Man from Bordeaux (the Antichrist): "sarrasins want to find the balm and give the treasure to the king of France"		Home	
32	Repeatidly from the end of august to the end of september (28th)			Trumpets, seven churches. Daniel's prophecy concerns Avignon. Lot. False prophets	Churches: Apoc. 1:4; 1:11; 8,2, etc. Expression «he that hath an ear»: Apoc. 2, 7; 2, 29; 3, 6; 3, 13; 3, 22; 13, 9. Trumpets: vid. chap. 14; Lot: Gen. 18-19. False prophets: Apoc. 2:15		

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
33	4th October, Tuesday	Night (after midnight)	Praying	The seven seals	Legitimacy of the one who will open the seals:Apoc. 5,2; 5,4; 5,9; seals: Apoc. 5, 2-5; 6,1, etc.; Opened book: 10:2.	Home	Visions about the book and the seals, in October
34	Wednesday (5th October)			Obligation to write the revelations			
35	Thursday (6th October)	Night (after midnight)	Praying	Maiestas domini with the lamb and the book. Seven seals and the book written inside and outside	Seals: see chap. 33. Book written inside and outside: Apoc. 5,1. Lamb: 14:1, etc.	Home	
36	Saturday (8th October)		During mass (elevation)	Book and the vision of the seals	See chaps. 33, 35.	Saint John's chapel	
37	Saturday (26th October?)*	Night (midnight)	Praying	Red letters, end of the world. Political vision		Home	Around All Saint's day

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
38	Sunday (27th October?)		During mass (elevation)	Announce of the parousia		Venlach's house	
39	31th October	Night (matins)	Praying	Many people with different tongues	Apoc. 7:9	Church	
40	Wednesday (30th October?)	Night (before going to bed)	Praying	Supension "a divinis" to some clerics. Evocation of last judgment		Home	
41	Thursday (31th October)	Morning or Matins?		The dragon will come and will take you to the desert. Antichrsit will come	Dragon and the desert: Apoc. 12, 4–6.	Saint John's chapel	
42	Monday, 4th November	Night (midnight)	Praying	How the queen of Naples died. Last judgment. Red beast will rise (according to John's book). The book of life	Book of life: Apoc. 3,5; 13:8; 17:7; 20:12; 20:15; 21:27; Old wise men: Apoc. 4,9; 5; 7,13, etc. Red beast: 12:3; but also Apoc 6:4; Apoc. 11:7; 17:8; etc.	Home	

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
43	Tuesday (5th November)			Book of life			
44		Night (before going to bed)	Praying	She is been called "crazy". The voice tells her she is like the Virgin Mary			
45				Red beast from the book of John	See chap. 42		
46	6th November	Night (dinner)		Sealed letter about politics: "it is from the bishop of Narbonne and it is a trap"			
47	30th November	Night (after complete)		End of the world: the "ages", last judgment		Saint James' chapel	

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
48	13th January 1385, Wednesday	Night (after midnight)	Praying	A smoky temple, an angel with a sword. Four vials for the seven angels. Trumpets and seven churches	Smoke: 9:2; 15:8; 18:9; 18:18; The Seven Churches: Apoc. 1,11; 8,2, etc. Vials: Apoc. 16 Trumpets: vid. chap. 14. Sword: 6:4; 12:17; 13:9; 19:15		January-Septuagesima
49	Thursday, (14th January)			The curses of John's book	The pouring out of the 7 vials: see chap. 48		
50	Friday (15th January)		During mass	The vision of the vials			
51	End of January	Night	Praying	A leper (the Pope of Avignon) spreading treasures – leprosy (simony)			

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
52	Easter night	Night (midnight)	Praying	3 ships – Last judgment	Ships: Vid. chap. 8		Easter Time
53	Monday, 13th April	Night (after complete)	Praying	3 ships (Avignon pope) – last judgment	Ships: Vid. chap. 8	Saint James' chapel	
54	Tuesday (14th April)		Praying	You will be judged. The dragon will come and will take you to the desert. Antichrsit will come	See chap. 41	Saint James' chapel	
55	Day of the conversion of Saint Paul (January 25th) 1386		During mass	Signs will be in the sun and the moon, in the stars and the lands. Last judgment	Signs: Luke 21:25; Apoc; 8:12	Saint John's chapel	
56				Her confessor didn't write unless he received a sign. He lost his sight			

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
57	28th July 1386, Sunday	Morning	During first Mass, praying	She is alone, like the Virgin Mary			
58	August 7th (Tuesday)		During Mass	Letter to the inquisitor; Schism; Daniel's quotation; Great whore	Daniel 8:13; 9:18. Great whore: Apoc. 17: 2-3		August
59	Wednesday (August 8th)		During Mass	Letter to the inquisitor; Pilatus' wife		Saint John's chapel	
60	Wednesday (August 8th)	Night (before going to bed)		Letter to the inquisitor		Home (oratory)	
61	Monday August 13th	Night (after midnight)	Praying	Six or eight men and women; Christ descended from the cross. He hit the women	Possibly: Apoc 14:4		

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
62	August 14–15th (Virgin Mary's Assumption)	Night (after midnight)	Praying	Women who fornicated with the great whore and drank the wine: the cardinals of Avignon	Prostitute and wine: 14:8; 17:1; 17:15; 18:3; etc.		
	From the 15th to the 22–23th August	Ninth hour		Ibid			
63	August 31th	Midday	Praying	Angel of revenge against the inquisitor		Church	
Letter of Constança's son							
			Praying	Last judgment			
				Two ships (Roman Church vs Avignon)	Ships: vid. chap. 8		
	Holy Friday			Last Jugdment concerning the "rulers"			

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
				Constança as God's seal			
Letters from Constança to the inquisitor							
I	Wednesday (after Virgin Mary's day)		Attending major mass	The wrath of God over Toulouse			
	Saturday, August 31th		Praying – during elevation of the host	Last Judgment			
			Attending major mass	An angel holding a bloody sword upon the pope of Avignon's head			
II				Constança is told to write down the Revelations (three times)			

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
	The day after Quincuagesima			About Constança's trial			
III			Attending mass (right after the Gospel)	End of the world. Constança as God's seal			
		Morning, 8h		The disciples of the Antichrist begin to the people of God			
IV				Three cardinals in Hell, one more tormented than the other two			
	21 november (vigil of Saint Cecilia)			The tormented cardinal was Pere de la Barrera			
	January 31th		Attending major mass, after having received communion	She is told to send the letters to the authorities			
				Blackness			

TABLE 8.1 Table of the occurrence of visions of Constança (*cont.*)

Chapter	Date	Daytime	Practice	Content	Biblical references	Place	Periods
				Cardinals' hat on fire. Pere de la Barrera			
	February 14th	Prima hora		Signs from heaven mean that the most powerful earthly man will attack the kingdom of France and Christendom			
V	March, 10th 1384			She has been told not to talk about her revelations but asks permission to do so			
VI	May 2nd			Betrayal by French envoys to England. The red crane will rise and restore the throne of the Pope of Rome.			

The manuscript is highly legible except for a few parts rendered unintelligible by humidity damage. Yet the state of preservation of the folios of the *Revelations*, especially the first one, is inferior to the other texts, which testifies to its circulation independently before it was put in this *compendium*. The manuscript was probably collected by Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno (d. 1638) at the beginning of the 17th century, which may be the time of the addition of the title. This humanist cardinal collected a large number of manuscripts from the south of France and Italy. Among the various inventories of his library that have been preserved, there is a mention of the revelations of a "Constantiae Rabusten," attributed in the inventory to a certain Guglielmo de Sancto Luca.[34] The text is dated "MCCLXXXIV", but whoever conducted the inventory clearly misread a C, since the date the text indicates is 1384. Thus, it is probably the same *libello* of the BNF, which was joined with the current volume afterwards, since a large part of the funds of this cardinal went to the National Library of Paris. In fact, he made an important donation that reached Bibliotheca Colbertiana through Mazarin.[35]

As for the content of the text, it is important to emphasize that it is not mystical or meditational literature. Constança does follow the precepts of the late-medieval spiritual practices of meditation on the Passion of Christ, but her witness is not connected with this tradition. It is a text integrally dedicated to apocalyptic revelations, with some interludes on the doubts and reflections of the visionary subject and an important part dedicated to exegetical interpretation.

Thus, the objective of the work is clear: it is an eschatological announcement that tries to warn the population and to update the discourse of John of Patmos.[36] We can distinguish four main parts: first, a prologue in the form of a discernment of the spirits, signed by Ramon de Sabanach, possibly a professor

34 "Constantiae de Rabusten revelationes ad summum pontificem auctore Guilelmo de Sancto Luca anno 1284." See Annie Lesage, "Les manuscrits du cardinal Guidi di Bagno," *Scriptorium* 51, 1 (1997), 104–151 (131). This authorship could probably refer to the translator or a copyist, although it is also true that only the prologue is signed by Ramon de Sabanach.

35 Blanca Garí, though, points to another provenance, that of the abbey of Moissac, the abbey on which the Rabastens priory depended since its foundation in the 12th century. Blanca Garí, "Constanza de Rabastens y Ramón de Sabanac: la escritura en relación," in *Protagonistas del pasado. Las mujeres desde la Prehistoria al siglo XX*, ed. María Isabel del Val Valdivieso et al. (Valladolid: 2009), 237–246 (237).

36 John of Patmos is the name by which the author of the Apocalypse has been known, since the text begins by saying that the author was on the island of Patmos. This John has been considered by most Christian authors to be the same John who wrote the Gospel.

of law in Toulouse and confessor of Constança.[37] Then, the revelations and comments were organized in 63 chapters, followed by the letters that her son took when Constança was imprisoned, and finally some other letters sent by her to the magistrates of Toulouse.

The chapters of the *Revelations* try to follow a logical chronology, that is, a parallelism with Constança's biographical evolution. However, this progress or the fact that the dates are indicated in the beginning of each "item" does not mean that it seeks a hagiographic objective, as it has been said, but simply a truthful testimony. After the episode of the awakening,[38] from Chapter 12 onward, the text concentrates on the apocalyptic aspect, whether with visions, auditions, or interpretations and doubts about the phenomena she experiences. At the same time, it begins to specify the dates of the visions (imprecise until then), with a clear goal of attesting the veracity of the facts. Likewise, although all this first part takes place in the domestic space, particularly during the night and always during or after the prayers, from Chapter 23, Constança's ecstasies start to happen in the exterior space, in different chapels of the church of the village, that of the Franciscans, or even in a particular house in which the minor friars were doing Mass. This coincides with the political turn of her interpretations, when the voice begins to dictate to her not only the visions but also the acts and missions she must carry out: to write to the authorities about the schism and the war, to warn the ecclesiastics, etc.

4 How to Know John's Teachings: Constança's Knowledge

All scholars who have been concerned with Constança's case have emphasized her illiterate condition, highlighting that when she "sees" the "book of Revelations," she does not understand the letters:

37 This prologue deserves an in-depth comparative analysis that would place it in its precise historical context, since the guidelines for declaring the falsity or veracity of discourses vary greatly in these centuries. The discernment of spirits intensifies from the prophecies of the 12th century onwards, but it is not until the 14th and 15th centuries that it begins to take on a gender bias, notably aimed at controlling the authority conferred by the prophetic discourse of, especially but not only, women. Wendy Love Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits. Assessing Visions and Visionaries in the late Middle Ages* (Tübingen: 2011) 3, 11. On the authority of this type of discourses, Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies. Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis-London: 1985), 92–3.

38 See the case of Hildegard von Bingen's visionary awakening a few centuries ago: Victoria Cirlot, *Hildegard von Bingen y la tradición visionaria de Occidente* (Barcelona: 2005), 11 et seq.

"Open the book." And she was afraid to touch the book for he had said that no one was worthy of opening this book except he himself. But he said to her: "Do not be afraid to open the book." And she opened it and it was all written in gold, outside and inside, and the seals were of gold as well. She said: "Lord, I see the book but I do not know the letters." And the voice said: "Do not be afraid, for here is written what I and the prophets have proclaimed, and I am that true God to whom John spoke who came to make the mute speak, and the time has come when the Son of Man will show his power."[39]

However, it should be noted that this episode concerns an act described in a visionary context. Constança is talking about a volume that combines the images of John's *Apocalypse* and the book of the seven seals (written on the outside and inside). Therefore, it is neither a real nor physical volume. The letters that she does not understand refer to the metaphorical meaning of the book of John, which she, thanks to the voice that interprets the images, has to unveil.[40] On numerous occasions, she demonstrates that she is aware of her exegetical exercise. Once she says, "If John saw such things, why didn't he explain it as I see it?" The voice's answer is: "It was not yet the time, because to open the book is nothing else than to proclaim my secrets."[41] So, the goal is not to "read" the words, but to interpret them in another time and context. As I see it, she is not saying that she does not understand the literal meaning of the letters, but that she does not know the allegorical meaning.

Therefore, this episode about the visionary book would have nothing to do with Constança's illiterate condition, but with a literary *topos* and with the logic of the unveiling of the prophecy: the prophet or prophetess is illuminated by infused science and reveals that which is impossible to understand, even by

39 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 53. "'Obre lo libre', E ella dubta tocar lo libre, car havia dit / que negu non era digna sino ell, e ell dix li: 'No dubtes / obrir lo libre'. E obrilo, e era tot scrit de letres d'aur dins / e defora, e los segells d'aur, ella dix: 'Senyor, io veig / be lo libre, mas no conech les letres'. E la veu dix li: 'No / dubtes, car açi est scrit ço de que io e los prophetas havien / parlat, e io so aquell Deu vertader de que Johan parla qui so / vengut e fas parlar los muts, e lo temps es vengut / que lo fill del home mostrara son poder'" (46r:11–19).

40 As far as I know, the only one who points to this episode as part of a *topos* is Blumenfeld-Kosinski in "Constance de Rabastens: Politics and Visionary Experience," 156–7. For the metaphorical use of the apocalyptic book, see Sergi Sancho Fibla, *Escribir y meditar*, 146–182.

41 "'Senyor, Johan ja vehe aquestes coses, per que no les / declara?' E raubi, e la veu dix li; 'No era gens temps, mas / altra cosa no es obrir lo libre, sino declarar los meus secrets'" (44r:13–14). Here I propose another translation to that of Blumenfeld Kosinski, since the meaning changes completely. She does not translate the sentence as a double negative so, for her, opening the book is one thing, and proclaiming God's secrets is another.

him or herself. At this time, laypeople or those who were not instructed in theological knowledge used this topos, understanding wisdom as "unattainable, i.e. hidden, because it is beyond natural knowledge".[42] As André Vauchez pointed out, sacred texts are part of the everyday life of the Western Middle Ages and are thus internalized and updated simultaneously in such a way that they are integrated into personal experience.[43] A close reading of the *Revelations* shows that Constança knew the scriptures, especially the Apocalypse, even in a very literal way, since her revelations follow quotations *verbatim*.[44] It is true that Constança most likely did not know how to write. However, it is difficult to assess what degree of reading skills she had, and what knowledge of the scriptures or of Latin she could have had: did she perform prayers and chants in this language? How much could she understand by assimilation with Occitan? The degree of knowledge of Latin, a language omnipresent in religious practice, is a question that needs to be assessed with caution during this period.[45] Besides, knowledge of the scriptures in these centuries did not depend exclusively on knowledge of Latin.

The point is not only that Constança knew the Apocalypse but that she also interpreted different passages and established a theological-exegetical logic for this endeavor. In fact, although she announces a near end, in no case does Constança establish precise dates. She limits herself to adapting what John announces to her own reality and advises humanity so that they can be saved. This exegetical dimension has been overlooked by previous studies, but it is

42 "Indocibilem, idest occultam, quia excedit naturalem cognitionem." Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite, *In de Divinis Nominibus*, c. 2, lect. 4, n. 192. See Anna Rodolfi, *"Cognitio obumbrata." Lo statuto epistemologico della profezia nel secolo XIII* (Firenze: 2016); and Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, *Santità e mistica femminile nel Medioevo* (Spoleto: 2013), 647–8.

43 André Vauchez, *La spiritualité du Moyen Age occidental* (Paris: 1975), 157.

44 See footnotes 78 and 79.

45 Literacy in the Middle Ages is a complex issue. Their mastery by nuns and *mulieres religiosae* have been shown to have been very diverse, so a dichotomous approach centered on the literate and illiterate is inadequate. See Patricia Stoop, "From Reading to Writing: The Multiple Levels of Literacy of the Sister Scribes in the Brussels Convent of Jericho," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout: 2015), 47–66; and Cynthia J. Cyrus, "Vernacular and Latinate Literacy in Viennese Women's Convents," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Ibid. (Turnhout: 2013), 119–132. Furthermore, there is a huge gap between writing and reading in this period. David Bell distinguishes between four levels of Latin: reading without comprehension, reading and comprehending an already familiar liturgical text, reading and comprehending less familiar texts, and writing in Latin. David Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo: 1995), 60.

evident in the text. First, she repeatedly presents herself as the newly chosen one to open the seals, emphasizing her female condition:

"Write down the seven seals of which speaks the Book of Revelation, for the first is the Holy Divinity; the second is any human creature who cannot recognize the Divinity's great humility when it was incarnated; the third is the Incarnation; the fourth is that no one is worthy of opening this seal except I, the son of God; the fifth will be opened by a woman; the sixth is that you will be this woman; the seventh is now opened."[46]

In this explanation, completely different from that of John, and repeated twice in the manuscript (also in 46r), the seals are interpreted in a concatenated or progressive way: from the divinity (God the Father); the humility that God had to become incarnate; God the Son (the incarnation); the divine character of the revelation of the divine mysteries, reserved to God; how Christ granted this possibility to a woman; and how that woman was Constança and the opening of the mystery, thanks to the revelations that she was experiencing. Thus, she reinterprets what John has already seen so that it is better understood in her own context. As the text states, some people were "glossing" the scriptures in an incorrect way, so she had to provide the people with a true understanding. Indeed, according to the text, with the testimony of Constança, these false "glossators" would no longer have an excuse for not knowing the true meaning:

"'Write down the vision that John speaks of in the Book of Revelation, the one where he says that he saw a multitude of people speaking different languages" [...] "Be not afraid to write since it is necessary that you write [...] [since] there will be some who will try to excuse themselves by saying that they would gladly preach the Scriptures but that no one would understand them. Therefore the testimony you will bear against them in the coming days will be the stronger because you will understand them all [them refers to the Gospels], and so they will not be able to excuse themselves anymore."[47]

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46 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 52. "'Scriu los. VII. segels de que parla lo libre de revelacions, / car lo primer es la Santa Divinitat; lo Segon es que [neguna?] creatura / humanal no pot conexer la gran humilitat que la Sancta / Divinitat hac quant se encarna; los ters es encarnat; es lo / quart es que no es negu qui sia digna de obrir aquest segell, / sino jo qui so fill de Deu; lo. v. per fembre sera ubert / lo. VI. tu seras la ffembre. Lo.VII. es ubert'" (44r:4–10).

47 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 54–55. "'Scriu la Visio de la qual parla Johan el libre de revelacions, on diu que molts ne vae sens nombre e de molts lenguatges' [...] 'No duptes scriure, car necessaria cosa es que scrives, car [...] e hani alcuns qui cuiden scusar e dien que volenters precahicarien l'avengeli sino que nol entendrien: hon ten gran sera lo testimoni que tu portaras contre ells, als Jorns sdevenidors, car tu los entens tots per ço nos poran scusar e are menys'" (47r:2–12).

It seems to me that this interpretative mission has been obviated precisely because of the prejudice of Constança's presumed illiterate condition. So it has been, for example, concerning the image of a red beast, identified by her as the pope of Rome.[48] This vision has been conceived as a misunderstanding of the scriptures by some scholars, who substantiated the fact that she did not take the Apocalypse too literally.[49] However, I believe that Constança is not speaking here of the beast from the abyss (Apoc. 11:7) or the one that arises from the sea (Apoc. 13:1–9), as these scholars indicate, but it is a prefiguration of the red horse of Apoc. 6:4. It is, indeed, a figure related to the vindictive Christ (Math 24:6) that will go against the pope of Avignon, since that red horse has in John's text a *gladius magnus* that we find in Constança's first letter to the inquisitor, just above the Avignon pope's head.[50] This figure also finds its echo in the crane with the red head, assimilated to Fébus, similarly alluding to his revenge on behalf of the pope of Rome.[51] Therefore, in this case, Constança uses different images to constitute her message without referring directly to a single passage but combining several of them.[52] When Constança wants to allude to a literal episode, she does so without any misunderstanding, as, for example, the episode of the dragon and the woman (Apoc. 12:3–7; 12:13–19), with which she identifies herself: "You will be interrogated, and the dragon will come to devour you. But you will be given wings and you will be transported into the desert."[53]

48 "Car levarsa la bestia roja, ço es lo / Papa de Roma del qual Johan havia parlat en lo libre de re/velacions, e la rojor significa foch de iusticia ab la qual / los destrohiria (47v:13–15)." "For the red beast will rise up, that is, the Roman pope of whom John had spole in his Book of Revelation, and red signifies the fire of justice with which he will destroy them." Ibid., 56.

49 "A de nombreuses reprises, l'Apocalypse est reprise littéralement dans le texte des Révélations, mais elle n'est pas toujours très bien comprise, et elle se trouve parfois appliquée de façon curieuse à certaines situations politiques." Hélène Charpentier, "La fin des temps dans le *Livre des Oraisons* de Gaston Fébus et les *Révélations* de Constance de Rabastens," *Senefiance* 33 (1993), 145–162, §10. URL: https://books.openedition.org/pup/3608 [last accessed: November 2022].

50 55v:9–10. The red color is omnipresent in Constança's revelations, and it seems evident that it is related to the moment of imparting divine justice.

51 42v:15–17 and 58r:10–12.

52 The same procedure is found in the vision of the smoke-filled temple of Avignon (49r:26–26) and the angel with the sword, which is a restatement of the temple of God (Apoc. 15:8–9), the destruction of Babylon (18:9; 18:18), and the army of Saint Michael (Apoc. 12:7).

53 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Two women of the Great Schism*, 54–55. "E seras menada a audiencia, e vendra lo Drago e volrat devorar; mas dades te seran ales, e seras portas al desert, e apres la desolacio de la Esgelya, aqui metex vendra Antecrist" (47v:1–3). Blumenfeld-Kosinski

Madeleine Jeay also speaks of "ridiculous misunderstanding" when Constança asks if, by "fialas" (bowls), the voice refers to threads ("fila" in Occitan).[54] To think that Constança really had no idea of the seven bowls of the Apocalypse does not make sense if we take into consideration the knowledge she has of the rest of the imagery. Besides, she herself mentions four men with "vials," bowls, just before that quotation. The remark about the "fialas" most likely served to reinforce the difference between the voice of Constança (a mere messenger[55]) and the voice that interprets the scriptures, that of God. This helped legitimize her discourse in some way. It has to be understood, again, as following the topos of the visionary's modesty of spirit, exemplified in what she repeats several times: "car yo son peccadora, e no son digna que hom me cregua e negun nom vol creure."[56] In any case, whether it is a strategy of the author of the text or a false humility of the prophetess, this episode should not eclipse her knowledge of the scriptures and her conscious exegetical work.

5 Rabastens' Imagery

Madeleine Jeay has also delved into the question of the possible ways in which Constança could have known the book of John, establishing three main channels: the influence of the pastoral work of the mendicant orders, the iconographic program of the Notre-Dame du Bourg de Rabastens, and a possible reading that her confessor gave her of the book.[57] Yet, two of these perspectives are obviated to concentrate solely on iconography, possibly because of the traditional association of images with illiterate people, an aspect that Jeay

seems to be more receptive to Constança's interpretation: "Here we have to ask how well Constance knew the biblical text. Perhaps she was fixated on the color red as the color of justice and simply omitted any reference to Revelation 12:9 in order to make her point." Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionnaries of the Great Schism*, 66.

54 49v:1–14. "Plus grave est le malentendu ridicule qui donne la mesure de ses limites, à propos des sept coupes." Madeleine Jeay, "Marie Robine et Constance de Rabastens," §7. It must be said that "fialas" is used both in Latin and Occitan, so we do not know whether she refers to the text of the Vulgate or to a vernacular commentary or preaching.

55 "Tu est lo meu / missetger" (54v:11–12).

56 Which is a literal reference to Apoc. 5:2, among other passages. Also: "E tu no est / aquella qui parle, mas lo Sant Spirit qui parla en tu" (55r:19). For this (sometimes self-referential) emphasis on the unleardness as a mode to emphasize that the source of the revelations is divine, see Barbara Newman, "Sybil of the Rhine," in *Voice of the Living Light. Hildegard of Binen and Her World* (Berkeley: 1998), 7.

57 Madeleine Jeay, "La transmission du savoir théologique. Le cas des femmes mystiques illettrées," *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales* 23 (2012), 223–241 (224).

defends on different occasions. For her, Constança assimilated the Apocalypse through images, either by contemplating the frescoes in the church, through the groups of preaching and discussion of the scriptures similar to those of Olivi's followers (in which, according to her, illuminated books would have been used),[58] or through the reading that her confessor would have done (also using illuminations).[59] Overall, it is therefore through images, according to Jeay, that Constança "read" and assimilated the book of John.

When Constança lived, there were different places of worship in Rabastens: the church of Saint Michel, that of the Franciscans, *Nostra Dona de la Capela*; other churches outside the walls, such as that of Mary Magdalene or Saint Bartholomew, probably another one in Saint-Jacques Hospital in the faubourg, and, obviously, the central one: Notre-Dame du Bourg. It is certain that this temple has had frescoes on its walls since 1260 and that the choir chapels were painted between 1310 and 1318 with some apocalyptic elements.[60] Moreover, two of these chapels are cited as places where Constança experienced her raptures: those of St. John and St. Jacques (see Table 8.1). In another of these chapels, like that of St. Martin, there is a tree of life analogous to the one Constança describes in Chapter 16.[61] Likewise, in the nave, there is a *Maiestas Domini* surrounded by the tetramorph, with angels with trumpets in the upper part and a censer. Finally, on the western wall, there is a lamb with the banner of the resurrection. Madeleine Jeay asserts that these images are the background of Constança's revelations, perhaps commented on or explained by preachers. However, it seems extremely difficult to imagine that a person could acquire such explicit and literal knowledge of the book of John solely through the contemplation of such images or even through their explanation. Save for the image of the tree, none of the other visions have a clear correlative in the frescoes, not to say that the references to the Apocalypse in the *Revelations* are recurrent and extremely literal.

58 Madeleine Jeay, "Marie Robine et Constance de Rabastens," §23, 25.

59 Madeleine Jeay, "La transmission du savoir théologique," 237. In recent decades, there have been many studies that criticize the idea that the image is subsidiary to the text or that images are the "Bible of the illiterate." See Jérôme Baschet, "L'iconographie médiévale: l'œuvre fondatrice d'Emile Mâle et le moment actuel," in *Emile Mâle (1862–1954). La construction de l'œuvre: Rome et l'Italie* (Rome: 2005), 273–288.

60 Guy Ahlsell de Toulza, "L'église Notre-Dame-du-Bourg de Rabastens," in *Congrès archéologique de France, 140e session* (Paris: 1982), 399–414.

61 Guy Ahlsell de Toulza, "Les peintures murales dans les chapelles du choeur de l'église Notre-Dame-du-Bourg de Rabastens-sur-Tarn," in *Actes du 96e Congrès national des Sociétés savantes organisé à Toulouse en 1971* (Paris: 1976), 239–265 (252–257).

To this must be added a further complication in the understanding of apocalyptic imagery in Christian temples, where literal transpositions are extremely rare. Marcello Angheben calls these images "composite theophanies" that take elements from different biblical visions and whose aim is, basically, to figure the invisible in the spaces important for the liturgy.[62] In fact, as has already been extensively studied, painted medieval images and sculptures did have a very clear influence on the meditations that the subject ordered and pictured in her or his mind as well as on the visions that came from ecstatic or semi-ecstatic phenomena. Alternatively, visions also provided new motifs in Christian iconography that were reproduced over the centuries and gave birth to new meditations and visions.[63] Numerous studies have shown how imagery helped shape visions, as might be the case with the Constança tree.[64] Yet, the frescoes of Rabastens could hardly give a literal and deep insight into content as complex as the Apocalypse. The answer to the knowledge acquired by Constança, I believe, must be elsewhere.

6 How to Be John: Visions and Auditions about the Apocalypse

Constança's testimonies of visionary experiences are intimately related to the spiritual practices of her time, and the visions and auditions happened during or after prayer and liturgical celebrations, something that is typical of this type of phenomenon.[65] Barbara Newman warned that spiritual disciplines, whether mental or bodily, did not guarantee visions, but they did facilitate them and sharpen sensitivity in different ways. If we review the mystical or

62 Marcello Angheben, "Apocalypse et liturgie: le cas des absides romanes," in *L'Apocalisse nel Medioevo*, ed. R.E. Guglielmetti (Florence: 2011), 329–350.

63 During my doctoral period, I had the honor of belonging to the group that studied iconography and mysticism, within the research group Bibliotheca Muystica et Philosophica Alois Maria Haas, at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. The bibliography in this field is very extensive, see i.e. Anne-Marie Bouché and Jeffrey Hamburger (ed.), *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (New Jersey: 2006); Victoria Cirlot, *Hildegard von Bingen*; or Sergi Sancho Fibla, *Escribir y meditar*.

64 Just like the scene in the flagellation that Constança meditates on (37v, 10) could have been modeled by the image of the same scene that appears in the thirteenth-century "Diptyque de la Confrérie de Rabastens," that today is conserved in the Musée de Périgueux.

65 As for the ambiguity that appears in the texts between vision and hearing, this is a typical phenomenon of the prophecy of this period, since the explicit referent was John of Patmos, in which the synesthetic phenomenon is also present (Apoc. 1:9–13). See Éric Palazzo, *L'invention chrétienne des cinq sens dans la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 2014), 42–3.

prophetic texts in this sense, we can see how much more often the visionary phenomena were derived from a systematized practice of preparation than spontaneous.[66] Moreover, in the second part of the 14th century devotional and meditational practices had already left the monastic cloisters where they had flourished centuries before, and had become a common activity of lay people.[67] In fact, beyond the lay-religious identity of Constança (*mulier religiosa*), which we cannot elucidate with the data we have, it is clear in her texts that she follows the Liturgy of the Hours rigorously and attends masses. Confession, on the other hand, does not seem to be such a fruitful practice for her ecstasies, since it is mentioned only once, together with prayer and Mass, and it does not trigger any vision (Table 8.1). Also, like other cases of visionaries, Constança has her raptures mainly during the night or at dawn. It is the morning prayers, in the intimacy of her oratory/dormitory, which arouse the apocalyptic images and where, in fact, the first awake takes place. From this point on, we begin to see that these experiences also happen to her in the chapels of the Franciscan church or in the main church, responding to a period in which her revelations are already known to society (the people and the authorities), and in which her visions also take on a political nuance with the interpretation she "receives."[68]

Table 8.1 describes each of the contents of the chapters of the *Revelations*, associating them with the chronological data, to the practices she was performing, and to the place where she was. I have not only indicated the dates but also the time of day, often associated with canonical hours. It should be said that I have only indicated data that are explicit, without deductions of space and time beyond what is said in the text. This also applies to references to the Apocalypse (and a few other biblical texts), where I have not added all lexical references (e.g., all references to mountains, the sun, or the lamb would be useless for our purpose). Instead, I have privileged explicit references to

66 Barbara Newman, "What Did It Mean to Say 'I Saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," *Speculum* 80, 1 (2005), 1–43 (3). For a concrete case of methodical practices to achieve *visio*, see the example of Marguerite d'Oignt: Sergi Sancho Fibla, *Escribir y meditar*.

67 "Visionary experience was not a spontaneous, wholly unpredictable incursion of the divine into the world. Rather, it was a privileged cultural practice by which those with appropriate qualifications – at first only monks and nuns, later beguines and tertiaries, eventually even devout laypeople – might court sacred encounters through techniques for the deliberate alteration of consciousness." Newman, "What Did It Mean to Say 'I Saw'?" 6.

68 It must be said that if the text does not specify it, it is difficult to deduce in which space it is located only by knowing the time of day, since we see that he also performs matins in the church during the night (47r) or complete matins in the chapel of San James (49r).

concrete passages, with a few exceptions that have a clear textual parallel. An example of this is when Constança speaks of a "fiery sky".[69] I conceive of this as a reference to the red moon of Apoc. 6:12, since just below it mentions men hiding in caves, as John's text does (6:15). Likewise, I have omitted all textual references to phrases that are constantly repeated in both Constança's *Revelations* and John's, such as references to the end times, the final judgment, or repeated sentences like "he that hath ears let him hear," etc.[70]

7 Where and When? Apocalypse and the Liturgy

Different conclusions can be drawn from the table. First, it is clear the exhaustive knowledge of the book of John and the direct references between one text and the other. As mentioned, an evident relationship is also established between visionary experiences and spiritual practices of prayer (either individually or collectively during Mass). The vast majority of the time, these episodes also occur between compline and matins. If we look at the dates, we can reconstruct the different periods in which the visions occur. These are: 1) from Easter to June, 2) between October and November, 3) the end of January, and 4) August. With these data, it seems that it is most likely that both the knowledge of the book of John and the visions of Constança are the fruits of the liturgical readings and chants associated with the Apocalypse.

The reading of the Bible during the liturgy is a subject of great complexity, with distinct practices and applications that depend on multiple factors. In some cases, there were continuous readings of the text. In other cases, the reading was partial, following the liturgical order, as in the case of the readings of Mass and the Hours. It is very difficult to know for certain how these practices were carried out in Constança's environment, since we do not have any information about her or about the religious environment of Rabastens at this time. Likewise, although we have evidence of Constança's proximity to the Franciscans, we do not even know what volumes this community had in the library or what kind of lectionary they used.[71] We do not know whether Constança actually became part of the third order, a confraternity, or some

69 39v, 7.

70 For instance, "For the time is at hand" (Apoc. 1:3); "And I beheld, and I heard" (5:11); "Write therefore the things which thou hast seen" (1:19); "He that hath an ear, let him hear" (2:11, etc.); "Who is worthy to open the book? and its reformulations" (5:2, etc.), among many other.

71 For example, a missal is mentioned in a document of 1392, but it is a book that first belonged to a layman and he bequeathed to the minors. It is all the information we have. Acquittal

other kind of group. We do not know either in what way she could follow the habits of the Franciscans or, on the contrary, whether she could observe the Liturgy of the Hours in a completely autonomous way, as it seems to be understood from the text. In that case, did she have a breviary? Was it in vernacular, Latin, or both? It is very common to find insertions of Latin phrases in vernacular visionary literature (even in cases of women considered "illiterate"), which testify to the importance of the liturgy as a trigger or as a support for the visions. Moreover, it is known that the reading of the Scriptures in vernacular language was common, and the Occitan area had a certain tradition in this sense, as Jeay pointed out, precisely with regard to Constança.[72] Despite the substantial lack of information, I believe we can get closer to the general uses of the text of the *Revelations* in the medieval liturgy to be able to understand its possible influence on a layperson such as Constança. Women and men like her were immersed in a religious environment in which ritual practices involved not only the readings of Mass but also a whole apparatus of chants, sermons, glosses from the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as in public homilies or even meditation groups.

At first sight, the impact of John's *Apocalypse* in medieval liturgy seems minimal (and it would become even lesser in the following centuries). Yet, especially in the West, it was used as a prophetic reading and as pericopes for some periods, especially in the Easter season (the 50 days after Easter).[73] The Apocalypse also fed, from very early on, the hymnal of the office.[74] In *Ordo Romanus*, the rite that Constança's entourage would probably follow, the presence of the Apocalypse was mainly focused on the following periods: 1) Easter-Pentecost season, 2) All Saints, when the reading of the Apoc. 7 had an important role, and 3) for the Christmas saints: Stephen, John the Evangelist,

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made by several Franciscan friars in favour of Martine de Fargues, Septembre 27th, 1392. ADT, 1 J 4/3, s. Old reference: Fonds de Viviers, n° 41 Livre de raison de Gui Calmettes.

72 See Footnote 60.

73 See Clifford Flanigan, "The Apocalypse and the Medieval Liturgy," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (New York: 1992), 333–351 (333, 337). In the Hispanic tradition there is abundant recourse to the Apocalypse, as attested by canon 17 of Toledo IV, which prescribes the reading of the book after Easter. The *Liber Commicus* designates it as *lectio prophetica* of the Mass for the Pascal time and other Gallican sources follow the same custom as well. As an example, the *Explanatio libri apocalypsis* from the compilation of Martín de León's sermons (ASIL, ms. XI.2, 174r–221r) is placed between the Ascension and the Pentecost. See Amélie de las Heras, "L'Apocalypse chez Martin de León (m. 1203), entre commentaire et sermon: une *lectio divina* tournée vers l'action," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 49/1, 61–84.

74 Matthieu Smyth, *La liturgie oubliée: la prière eucharistique en Gaule antique et dans l'Occident non romain* (Paris: 2003), 482.

and the Holy Innocents. This is also the case in other ritual codes, such as in numerous breviaries, where we also find readings from this book at 4) Epiphany and Septuagesima (end of January). The number of antiphons related to the book of John is also important on these dates, but if we reflect on such verses, we must doubt the possibility of a clear understanding of the apocalyptic passages only from Latin antiphons and hymns. By that, I mean that it is difficult to conceive of these texts as something more than a punctual influence, maybe by a single term easily understandable for people like Constança. For instance, it is not unreasonable to deduce that she could understand the words "libro vitae" (in Occitan, "libre de la vida") from the antiphon "Ambulabunt mecum in albis, quoniam digni sunt, et non delebo nomina eorum de libro vitae."[75] However, we must separate two different aspects of the relationship between Constança and the Apocalypse. One thing is the understanding of the text, which most probably was done by reading, during or after the prayers and the rite; and another is the activation of the visionary senses, which, in this case, could be triggered by the sensorial experience of the liturgy and, therefore, also by a single mention in a song or chant.

As mentioned, the breviaries followed this chronological scheme with respect to the year, but they also had daily logic. The Liturgy of the Hours shows that the prayers that are most dependent on the text of the Apocalypse are those close to the evening: matins, vespers, and compline.[76] Not only do the responsories and antiphons depend on this text, but also on the readings, especially those of matins, in which the fragments were read not in continuity, but in a seasonal manner.[77] Thus, we can notice that the apocalyptic images of Constança follow the two timelines in which the book of John was commonly used in the liturgy. On one hand, there is a propensity for visions that occur between completes and matins. On the other hand, the periods in which these visions occur are Easter-Pentecost, around All Saints, and at Septuagesima (period 7). In the few cases where we know for certain the readings that were to be done at the daily liturgy, we can go even further. For example, there is a total coincidence between vision and liturgy in the revelation of the Matins

75 "They shall walk with me, clothed in white, for they are worthy, and I will not blot out their names from the book of life." (My translation). René-Jean Hesbert, *Corpus antiphonalium officii*, vol. 3 *Invitatoria et antiphonae* (Rome: 1968), 286, n. 6082. Both the book of life and the blank garments appear in different visions of Constança, see Table 8.1.

76 Jules Baudot, *Les Lectionnaires* (Paris: 1908).

77 Richard Francis Gyug, "Early Medieval Bibles, Biblical Books, and the Monastic Liturgy in the Beneventan Region," in *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, ed. Susan Boynton, Diane Reilly (New York: 2011), 34–60.

of All Saints. In it, Constança quotes exactly the passage of Apoc. 7:9, which is read for the office of that day.[78]

The exception to this system is the last period, in which the visions occur in August, a time that is not particularly prone to apocalyptic readings. The visions in this case begin with Constança hearing Mass and quoting the book of Daniel (perhaps Daniel 8:13, or 9, 18–27): "and that the words of Daniel have been fulfilled: 'When you see in a holy place the establishment of desolation and abomination …'".[79] Precisely, this passage from Daniel is mentioned in another chapter, also in the same period (Chapter 58, August 7). Therefore, it is possible that it was a text associated with a prayer or reading from this month. But if we look to Constança's apocalyptic visions of this period, we find basically two references to the Whore of Babylon, which are dated between August 13 and 15. And it is precisely the reading concerning her that we find in numerous lectionaries of Gallic tradition for the day of the Assumption of Mary (Apoc. 14:1–7), that is to say, August 15.[80] We do not know if such a tradition was in force in Rabastens in the 14th century, but the coincidence is noteworthy.[81]

I strongly believe that the political implications of Constança's visions have distracted some other fascinating aspects of this 14th-century text. A close analysis of the manuscript leaves some new findings regarding her knowledge of the scriptures as well as the possible influences for her imagery. In the first place, this was a person who knew the Apocalypse perfectly well, and this knowledge was visual and textual. Second, she does exegetical work, and she is perfectly aware of it. It also seems to me that one cannot rely on imagery as the only source of knowledge of the Apocalypse. I do not deny, far from it, that some of Constança's visions could have been modeled by the material imagery of her time (the case of the tree of life is quite evident in this sense). However, these images could not, in any case, provide her with the knowledge

78 47r:2–12, quoted above. Exceptionally, the tradition of reading this passage, which still exists today, is easily traced back to medieval times: Flanigan, "The Apocalypse and the Medieval Liturgy," 334–5. See also Derek A. Olsen, *Reading Matthew with Monks. Liturgical Interpretation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Minnesota: 2015), 164.

79 "Complida es la paraula que diu Daniell, que, quant al loch / sant veurets la desolacio de la abomincio star" (52r:19–20).

80 See Elias A. Lowe. André Wilmart, and Henry A. Wilson (ed.), *The Bobbio missal: a Gallican Mass-book* (*ms. Paris. Lat. 13246*) (London: 1920), 156.

81 Another coincidence could be the vision of chapter 16 concerning the 24 old men, whose reading (Apoc. 4) seems to have been the first Sunday after the Ascension, a date that could fit with the period indicated by Constança: between Easter and Pentecost. However, as the text does not specify the precise date, it is impossible to verify it.

of the scriptures that the visions show, and this assumption is conditioned by the prejudice of her illiterate nature. Then, the answer to the question scholars have asked about Constança's knowledge must lie in the practices of reading, writing, and singing related to late medieval spirituality and, especially, in the possible participation in glosses and sermons, as well as in the liturgical and paraliturgical practices that the text attests. The scarce information available to us about her and her religious environment prevents a more concrete analysis of the liturgy that Constança could follow in the different spaces in which she performed her prayers (at home, in the church, in the Franciscan convent, in other houses, etc.). Yet, it does become evident that the visions are activated in moments in which the text of John is read or sung during the rite, being, in some cases, a total coincidence between the readings and the visions. This relationship between visions and liturgy is certainly not the only one within the visionary or prophetic literature of the late Middle Ages, but her case is striking, considering her belonging to an environment far from theological discourse.[82] She was indeed a woman, lay (or lay-religious), and unlearned (not educated in the hegemonic spaces of high knowledge). This case shows us that rituality should be understood as a platform for laypeople to participate in the knowledge of scriptures and, more precisely, in the eschatological discourses of the time.

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82 See Sancho Fibla, *Escribir y meditar*; Racha Kirakosian, *From the Material to the Mystical in Late Medieval Piety* (Cambridge: 2021); or my forthcoming article "'La feste que fesien en Paradis'. Liturgy and Ecstatic phenomena in Female Spiritual Writings from 14th-century Southern France", in *Kirchenjahr weiblich*, ed. Marie-Eve Geiger (Berlin: in press).

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The many crises of the high and late Middle Ages in Europe saw a resurgence of interest in apocalypticism and millenarianism. Pious Christians who feared the coming judgement day but found the established Church lacking in an adequate response, sought out leadership and direction from thinkers who appealed to their lived experience. In this volume, we examine how this eschatology was interpreted, expressed, and disseminated in popular culture by a variety of lay religious movements and individuals such as the Order of Apostles, Bianchi, Guglielmites, Wycliffites, and Hussites among others. The authors here focus on how this creative response to apocalypticism reflected the changing social and political culture of medieval Europeans and illuminates the active exchange of popular and elite religious culture in the era.

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